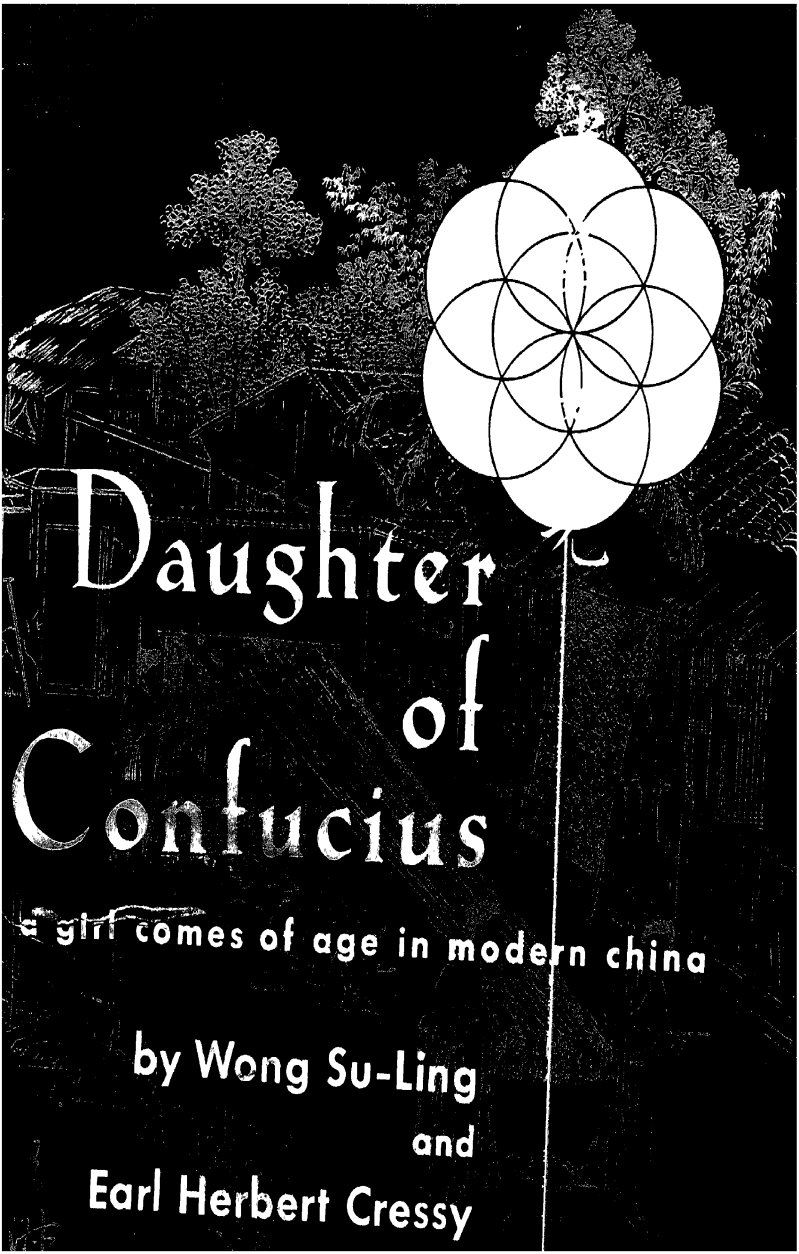

Daughter of Confucius
a girl comes of age in modern china
by Wong Su-Ling
and
Earl Herbert Cressy

Daughter of Confucius

A Personal History

by WONG SU-LING *and*
EARL HERBERT CRESSY

WONG SU-LING was born on the last night of the Chinese lunar year corresponding to 1918, in the inner courtyard of a wealthy Chinese gentry home. Except that she escaped having her feet bound, her upbringing as "girl number seven" would have been much the same had she been born many centuries earlier. Her grandmother, mincing from room to room on bound feet, her arms resting on the shoulders of two slave girls, ruled the household of fifty-one persons. And they, in turn, belonged to a powerful clan of three thousand.

The story of the unbelievable changes that overtook her tradition-bound life; the Bible woman who came to see Grandmother and converted the whole family; the coming of war and the flight to safety; romance and marriage and the years in America; all these happenings are told with the tension and suspense of fiction.

The reader is carried behind the bamboo curtain of her Confucian home to witness events seldom seen by Western eyes. The customs and superstiti-

(Continued on back flap)


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DAUGHTER OF CONFUCIUS

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DAUGHTER OF CONFUCIUS

A PERSONAL HISTORY

By

WONG SU-LING *and* EARL HERBERT CRESSY

Farrar, Straus and Young: New York

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CONCERNING THE AUTHORS

WONG SU-LING is the pen name of the Chinese co-author, who wishes to remain anonymous. She was born in 1918 in an official family in South China. The book is her story.

EARL HERBERT CRESSY has spent thirty-eight years in China. For twenty-five years he was in national work in connection with the Christian colleges and high schools as an executive secretary of the China Christian Educational Association, and for some years as Acting General Secretary.

He has preached on the street in villages where they had never seen a foreigner, and has been Associate General Secretary of the National Christian Council of China. He has taught English to high-school students, been director of a university summer school, lectured before universities in China and India, and has been the honorary secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society, North China Branch. He has served on Chinese government committees, and received a citation from the National Government of China. He is currently Professor of Chinese Studies in the Hartford Seminary Foundation.

PREFACE

THIS NARRATIVE is the intimate story of a girl growing up in a Chinese gentry household of fifty-one persons. These are real people, the events took place as narrated, and it is not a composite picture, for it is all a part of Miss Wong's own experience.

It is not usually understood that the essential China is not the four hundred million of the peasantry whose lives lie open and have been extensively studied and written about, but the gentry, the small, powerful landlord-scholar-official class, whose private lives lie hidden behind the bamboo curtain that symbolizes the separation of the sexes in their large households. This is the elite class which has made China what it is, and is the real carrier of Chinese culture.

This narrative is unique in that there are only four or five books in English dealing with families of this class, and they are wholly or in large part fiction. It is also significant for understanding contemporary China because it pictures a clan, and the clan is the basic unit of Chinese society, and in large part, of Chinese government at the local level. But sociological generalizations are not enough for understanding, and this narrative portrays people in action, in order to know and sympathize with them.

The main incidents are so vividly remembered and have been so often retold that they have become almost stereotypes. Weeks of discussion have gone into the reconstruction of additional details, and Miss Wong has answered innumerable questions. Here her highly trained memory—she can repeat whole books of Confucian classics by heart—has been of great service.

No claim is made that all this is typical of China as a

whole, but in cases where comparison has been possible there has been close correlation.

My part has been selection and organization of material, both written and oral, much of which has had to be omitted, rewriting, and provision of political and sociological background.

Perhaps my chief function has been to provide an outside point of view together with something of insight based on long residence in China, and to interpret and make explicit things taken for granted by Chinese and those familiar with China, the lack of which would prevent Western readers from understanding. This has been done by interpolating words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs. All of this has been checked jointly.

Kan San is a fictitious locality. Names of persons and places have been omitted or changed. Certain events have been transposed or combined, and the chronology has been altered in some cases.

I here record my deep appreciation of the scientific detachment and dispassionate devotion to the facts of my Chinese co-author, and also of her husband, who has made an important contribution.

EARL HERBERT CRESSY

Hartford Seminary Foundation
January 10, 1952

II

COMPARED WITH the indefinite time, my individual life is too short to pass through. But I love my precious life, for I have had my significant experiences in it. In my experiences, I realize the Chinese culture deeper and love it dearer. It is my hobby to indulge myself in any kind of culture either

Chinese or Western, and like it. I consider that the truth in the world is only one. We may be different from one another in dress, eat, drink, shelter and so many ways of living, but all of us love life and have the same sense of right and wrong. So far as culture is concerned, I think we have the same inclination. It would be a pity just letting the glimpse of our life pass through without leaving a few things behind us, for even the birds' clawprints remain in the snow for a little while!

I dared not to try to tell my story like this while I was studying in Hartford Seminary Foundation in the first year. After I received more advanced knowledge from my professors and made more acquaintances with my American friends, it was confirmed by the facts that I should tell some of the Chinese things by my story, and from which China may be deeper and clearer be understood by the Westerners who are superficially different from our Chinese.

I am but a humble Chinese student, and without trying to compare myself with our or Western scholars who wrote so many books about China, I just tell my own story faithfully according to the facts. I never pretend to be a hypocrite! My story may be considered good or bad, conservative or progressive, and the like. But this is only my true, past history. Nobody can deny the facts and does not believe in truth. During the past years and under the past circumstances, my family as well as the whole China was dominated by Confucian thought, and especially my grandmother used to teach us younger generations with the Confucian teachings. So I am glad to use the title of this book suggested by Professor Cressy, *Daughter of Confucius*.

Here, I should particularly thank Professor E. H. Cressy, the co-author of this book. He has been in China almost forty years and has a profound knowledge in Chinese classics and a wide experience in Chinese affairs. Without his encouragement, I would not dare to tell my story and without his help in correcting and re-writing of my English, this

book would not be turned out, to the public. Of course, he put in a lot of explanations and precious ideas, so he is one of the authors of this book.

May 28, 1952 WONG SU-LING

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PART ONE

Household and Clan

OUT OF THE *remote past has come the continuity of life expressed in the four generations of our clan that appear in this narrative. Both individual and clan press forward into the future. They run true to the ancient pattern, yet change to meet the exigencies of a changing world. Here is a quarter of the human race striving to work out its destiny—my own clan an infinitesimal unit in this vast aggregate.*

I

Girl Number Seven

IT WAS the last night of the Chinese lunar year corresponding to 1918. A turbulent wind from across the South China Sea swept through the narrow streets of our little interior city of Kan San, and whined around the upcurving roofs of the cluster of buildings that made up our household. At times a waning winter moon shone through bedraggled clouds and shed dim light on a silent courtyard, with its stone tables of potted plants, and its paving of pale gray slabs of stone with the shadows of bamboo swishing back and forth across them.

Our five other courtyards were festive with candles, and sounds of the new year's merrymaking penetrated to this dark court, apparently deserted, except for a soft light in one room. Outside in a passageway, what appeared to be a bundle of old clothes was thrown carelessly over a bamboo reclining chair.

A young woman appeared in the doorway of the lighted room. She went hastily to the chair and, seizing on the bundle of old clothes, began to shake it. A skinny hand emerged. Then a figure straightened up, revealing disheveled white hair and close-set eyes in a pale face that appeared older and more wrinkled than the ancient garments in which it had been half hidden.

The girl urged her further and the old crone came awake

with a prodigious yawn. She got up with surprising agility, put a hand on the girl's shoulder, hurried along on her bound feet with stiff strides like a stilt-walker, and disappeared through the door. For some time muffled sounds of activity reached the court. They finally ended in the wail of a newborn child.

Thus I entered on my present incarnation, as my Buddhist mother used to tell me of it.

It was not an auspicious entry. When she had completed the delivery, our old midwife began to complain that my mother should have delayed a few hours until after the turn of the year, and blurted out what everyone knew, but considered bad luck to say, that I had been born at the time when the life-giving sun was at its lowest point and the powers of darkness were at their apogee.

"She will either have bad luck herself or bring ill fortune upon others," the midwife said, looking like an ancient witch of ill omen.

This oracular pronouncement was received with dismay by the ladies of our household, and especially by Wood Orchid, mother's devoted slave girl, but grandmother forbade it to be repeated, and gave it a characteristic interpretation of her own.

"She is a clever girl and has gotten off to a fast start," she proclaimed. "Two hours after she is born she is already two years old. She will go far."

This became the official version, but in spite of grandmother's prohibition the old midwife's prognostication got around the household and was remembered later, although no one ever dared to mention it to grandmother.

This is the way it was figured. Age in China is calculated from the very beginning of life, so children are considered to be one year old at birth. Each additional year begins to be

reckoned on new year's day, so I was one year old at birth and was officially two years at the turn of the year two hours later. I have been getting older ever since, but not quite so fast.

My birth brought the number of souls in our big household up to fifty-one and I was number seven in my generation of our branch of our clan of Wong. Seven is *chih* in Chinese. Senior relatives called me Ah Chih, the syllable "Ah" being merely a sound prefixed to single-word names, usually of servants or children. I was Miss Seven to servants and dependents.

I was named Ling, which means "bell" and is considered a nice-sounding name for a girl. This little-girl name was given me because my mother had heard a temple bell ringing for the new year soon after I was born. I was Ah Ling to my more immediate relatives. My mother called me Ling Ling, using an affectionate duplication.

2

I was turned over to a wet nurse in whose charge I remained for the next two years, because ladies in families of the gentry class such as ours did not consider it delicate to nurse their children. Then I was put in charge of a girl of nine who was assigned by grandmother as my personal slave girl. Her name was Orchid Blossom. My very earliest childhood memories center around her for she carried me on her back for a large part of the day for the next five years, until I was seven years old. Of course I learned to walk long before this. But I was Orchid Blossom's responsibility. It was simpler for her to carry me. Then she knew where I was. Otherwise I was apt to be all over the house with the other children and into mischief for which she would be blamed.

"Come, Miss Seven," she would say, "you'll get all tired out if you go on running around that way. If you get sick your grandmother won't like it."

Or more often, "You'd better let me carry you now, I'm afraid you'll fall down and hurt yourself again."

This referred to the time I had fallen and bumped my head on our stone floor and Orchid Blossom had been severely scolded.

I liked to be carried on her back. I remember how she used to take a square of blue cotton cloth and put it over my little bottom, then put me on her back, crook herself to make her back come in contact with my chest, and tie the corners of the cloth over her shoulders, under her arms, and diagonally across her chest. When she straightened up there was slack enough to give me sufficient freedom of movement while at the same time I was carried securely. This left her arms free for the chores that were her daily duties, and I often slept on her back, lulled by the rhythmic motion of weaving or sweeping.

Orchid Blossom was short, fat, and much stronger than I. She had a round face with smiling eyes and heavy black eyebrows. Her cheeks were always rosy. Her thick lips moved slowly and she had a soft voice. Her hair was black, heavy and shiny, with a fringe across the forehead and the rest braided and folded up into a "grasshopper" tied over the middle with pink yarn. I always thought she was very nice-looking when she wore her dress of blue cotton printed with white plum blossoms, and a pair of long trousers reaching to her black cloth shoes. She was always sparkling and happy when she saw me, and was smart and thoughtful. By that I mean that she knew how to anticipate my wants so I was well cared for and had no occasion to become impatient over poor service or delay. But it went far beyond that. She was my first good friend.

Orchid Blossom's home was a very poor one in a nearby country village. She had been sold by her parents to our family when she was five years old, for some hundred and fifty dollars. The contract was made through a middleman and provided that she be allowed to visit her parents once a year. It also specified that she be married to a man to be chosen by us, and thus set free, before the age of twenty, and supplied with an adequate dowry of clothes, bedding, and bridal jewelry. All this was in accord with a custom that goes back forty centuries to the beginning of Chinese history.

She always called me Miss Seven, and in this formality never lost sight of my status as mistress and hers as slave girl, but that did not prevent us from being devoted to each other. Indeed, I tried to get her to call me Ah Ling as my grandmother did, but she said that grandmother would scold her for forgetting her place and being disrespectful. To Orchid Blossom I represented our gentry clan.

For my part, I could do things for myself, but I soon got the idea from the ladies of our family that it was fitting and much more elegant for persons like us to have our slave girls and servants wait on us.

My bodily contacts both day and night with Orchid Blossom were more close and constant than with my mother. I slept in a small room back of mother's with Third Sister, who was my own sister, and our two slave girls had cots in the same room. There was barely space enough for our beds and a chest of drawers where our clothes were kept. It was a gloomy room with only one small window, so that we were seldom in it during the day.

3

Our slave girls always used to sing us to sleep, for I was

afraid of the dark and of ghosts and devils. They often used this song, which is known to Chinese children everywhere.

Yueh-liang wan-wan jao lo tai
Ta ko ah chen ko shu lai
Ko-swei chung kuai yao lai liao
Ai-ya, ai-ya.
Ko-swei chung kuai yao lai liao
Ai-ya, ai-ya.

A comparison of the Chinese transliterated above with the translation below will indicate that the English has the same number of syllables, thus exactly reproducing the verse form and rhyme scheme as well as giving a close approximation of the meaning. The initial syllables *yu* and *li* have a value corresponding to grace notes in music. They sharply accented the meter as they sang.

Crescent moon shines on the tower—
Yawn, and you're in slumber's power.
Slumber Bug is coming soon,
Ai-ya, ai-ya.
Slumber Bug is coming soon,
Ai-ya, ai-ya.

Poetry is an integral part of the life of scholarly families like ours, and it is only a short step from the poetic to the supernatural, which is close to all Chinese—including me.

When I woke up in the night, which was often, I was terrified by the sounds in our creaky old house, or by shadows on the high ceiling of our narrow room. It was no use calling on our two slave girls for help. They were still more afraid and believed far more fervently in demons. At first I had candles and matches on a chair beside my bed for company when I woke, but one night I failed to blow out the candle before

dropping off to sleep again, and the wind blew my bed curtain into the flame and nearly set the house on fire. After that mother would not let me have a light, so all I could do was to call to her when I became too frightened. Usually a word from her would quiet me. If not, she would come and take me into her bed for a while. She believed in demons too, and was afraid, but in a more adult fashion.

4

One day when I had to come in and bow to a guest of mother's, I took the first chance to slip away on my own affairs and, returning cautiously for something I had forgotten, was just in time to hear a remark by the guest.

"Doesn't that child ever sit still for three minutes?"

My mother shook her head, smiling. "You see, she was born just before new year, which is the busiest time of the year, and she has been busy like that ever since."

"Can't anyone control her?" asked the guest.

Mother shook her head again. "She wants to do what she wants to do," she said.

With this I fully agreed.

II

Grandmother

THIS WORLD of my childhood lay within the inner apartments inhabited by wives, concubines, slave girls, and female servants. The men whose preserve it is consider that the feminine part of the household is their own personal and exceedingly private affair. They do not talk about it and it is not good form—except in modernized circles—to inquire about its inmates, even in the most conventional of polite formulas. Its fair denizens seldom emerge, and never to reveal its secrets. Even a doctor cannot see a female patient. He surveys only an ivory model of her figure, on which is indicated the place where it hurts.

Of the fifty-one persons in our household at the time when I was small, twenty-seven were the four generations of our clan, seventeen were slave girls, and seven were hired servants.

We lived in six courtyards. To the right of the front courtyard was another with the schoolroom and the living quarters of the unmarried men and older boys, and to the left a smaller one with the rooms of our steward, Kiu Kung—this is the title which I always used in addressing him and means "junior granduncle"—grandmother's third younger brother. At the back of the reception hall was the doorway, hung with the bamboo curtain which symbolized the separation of the sexes and was the entrance to the other three courtyards, one behind the other, constituting our woman's world.

In the first lived our family, husbands sharing the rooms of

their wives. In the second were the women's dining room and rooms for children and their personal slave girls. The third included kitchen, servants' rooms, storehouse, and well. Behind was a yard off which opened several workrooms. Each of these three courtyards had rooms on all four sides, the main ones facing the south, with wide, upcurving eaves to shut out the sun. All the rooms had only interior windows opening on the courtyards. This added to their seclusion and protected us from prying or depredation from without.

Our household was predominantly made up of women, thirty-five females to sixteen males. Deducting children, who were equally divided, the adults numbered twenty-seven women and eight men. The inequality lay chiefly in our seventeen slave girls. The lives of these people were all mixed up together regardless of the category to which they belonged, whether gentry, slave girls, or servants. This was particularly true of the slave girls, seven of whom married into gentry families, while most of the rest married our clerks or tenant farmers.

2

After my personal slave girl, my earliest recollections center around my grandmother, whose energetic presence dominated these inner apartments and who indeed had virtually ruled our branch of the clan since the death of my grandfather when I was four.

I remember him only dimly as an ancient and benevolent effigy in white whiskers and a stiff gown of crimson brocade on ceremonial occasions, for he was the head of our entire clan of Wong with its three thousand souls. He used to have me sit on his knee when I came to pay my respects in the morning, and question me about my small affairs.

"Ah Chih," he would ask solemnly, "are you sure that you washed your face this morning? It doesn't look like it."

"No, grandfather," I would reply. "I never do. Orchid Blossom does it for me."

Or he would ask me about Black Dragon, grandmother's little old dog who was my playmate.

"Ah Chih, has Black Dragon eaten his rice this morning?"

This was really a facetious play on words, involving the more formal phrase we occasionally used to say good morning, "Have you eaten your morning rice?"

"I asked him that myself, grandfather," I would answer, taking his words literally, "but he didn't say."

"Ah," the old gentleman would reply with immense seriousness, "so he didn't say, eh?"

He did not do this with the other children, so Orchid Blossom told me later, and said it was because I was not afraid of him.

The boys always stood before him, rigid and correct according to the Confucian etiquette of filial piety and respect for elders. To them he was more a symbol than a person, and only one degree removed from the spirit tablets in the big cabinet which constituted the ancestral shrine in the reception hall, for which, indeed, they had something less of awe than for the old gentleman himself. With them he was bound by the punctilio of the Confucian code. With me, a small girl, he could unbend.

3

Grandmother ruled us with Confucian sternness. Our entire household was synchronized to her movements. We all commonly talked of the three signals she made which governed us. The first was in the early morning. When she cleared her

throat, the sound carried all through the house, and I can even now hear activity beginning in all the adjoining rooms as my mother and aunts hastened their toilets so as to go to her room to pay their early-morning respects.

"Wake up, Miss Seven," Orchid Blossom would say. "Time to get up." And she would bring me a basin of hot water.

"Miss Three, Miss Three," my sister's slave girl would echo. "Are you ready for me to comb your hair?"

Then Orchid Blossom would help me into my trousers, which were fastened about the waist with a sash, and into my long gowns, the number of layers varying with the season, and lastly she would tie my shoes. Each gown had to be buttoned up the side and over the right shoulder, and each had nine buttons, or rather knotted braid that had to be fitted into loops of the same braid. I hated all these knots and loops. Mother always told me to let Orchid Blossom button me up, but I wanted to do it myself and often had a long struggle with the loops that were hard to reach and into which the knots never seemed to fit.

Grandmother's second signal was the snort that preceded and punctuated her speech. This was caused by some malformation, and became more pronounced when she was critical or indignant, which was often.

The third signal was the sound of grandmother's bound feet in her three-inch-long shoes, as she began to go from one part of our house to another for her morning inspection. They went "ko-ko, ko-ko, ko-ko." The approach of this sound was the signal that everything must be in order and everybody ready to greet her.

She was always accompanied by her two personal slave girls, Jem Po and Wan Sen, one on each side, and followed by two small black dogs. She walked with a hand on the shoulder of each girl, and slightly behind them. Emperors are pictured

thus, and indeed she was in her way the empress of our little world. She always wore black, usually silk, with a black headdress to conceal the fact that she was slightly bald.

Her two slave girls were dressed in gorgeous silks of exotic pattern, and her plain parchment face and broad, dumpy figure in its somber clothes were in sharp contrast to their youthful slenderness and colorful costumes. As in all things, there was custom and theory back of this. Her plain black garments represented Confucian modesty, whereas the sumptuous array of her slave girls exhibited the power and prestige of our clan. Jem Po, our most beautiful and stately slave girl, for example, thus symbolized our family's exalted status when she poured tea for male guests in our great reception hall as the only woman who came in contact with men outside our family.

Grandmother would stalk into a room and give a keen glance around. She missed nothing. All present would rise to greet her.

"Good morning, grandmother," the members of the family would say, and the servants and slave girls would echo, "Good morning, Lao Tai Tai," which means "old lady" but carries the respectful meaning of elder or venerable lady.

"Hah . . . morning," she would snort, using a polite monosyllable in reply. But it did not sound at all polite the way she said it.

When she was talking only to servants or slave girls, she would make some disparaging remark.

"Hah . . . not finished with that task yet, I see . . . hah. . . ."

Or if their work was completed, she would always have some criticism. She was never known to speak a word of praise and never joked or even smiled. She had a long face that seemed to grow constantly longer with disapproval as her daily inspection proceeded. She did not allow groups of servants or even our ladies to get together for idle talk or gossip. Each one must have allotted tasks and keep busy all day long.

Grandmother

She was so fat that no chair in the house was wide enough for her to sit down. Therefore, when she visited the rooms of the various ladies of our household, she sat on benches with the two slave girls standing behind her serving her tea, fanning her, or holding the little gray monkey that First Uncle had brought her from Java and that was her special pet. Most of the time, however, she used a rattan chair which was moved from place to place. When I think of her, I see her with her two slave girls, one on each side, tugging at her arms and helping her heave herself up out of this chair.

As her youngest granddaughter, and daughter of her favorite son, I was in a special position. She seemed to like to have me around, and would ask, "Where is Ah Ling . . . hah . . . why isn't she here with me?"

Or when I came to her room to bow and pay my respects in the morning she would say, "Don't go, Ah Ling . . . hah . . . I want you to help me this morning."

Therefore I found myself spending a good deal of time with her each day. I liked her room, the largest and most cheerful in the house. She usually sat where she could see out through the windows and keep track of all that went on in the courtyard, where most of the family lived.

At times she would make an elaborate pretense of talking things over with me, or on occasion would turn to me when household matters were being discussed with some of the others.

"Now, Ah Ling . . . hah . . . you agree with me on this matter, I am sure."

I always did.

This was her closest approach to humor.

4

One of the earliest pictures I have is that of grandmother in

our front courtyard. It is specially vivid because we were seldom able to go out there, since it was territory ordinarily reserved for men, and women could use it only when they were away, although children—this included girls under ten—could go there on most occasions.

As I well remember it, one came in the front gate from the street and entered a spacious courtyard with a stone walk up the middle, and three gray stone tables with potted plants on each side. Behind the stone tables on the left was an artificial rockery with stones of fantastic shape, and on the right a big *kang* of yellow porcelain, about five feet in diameter and three feet high, filled with water—the home of a company of very lazy goldfish. On each side of the courtyard were dwelling rooms, and at the far end uprose the lofty reception hall, open to the courtyard, its roof with its upturned eaves borne on massive, red-lacquered pillars, high above the surrounding buildings, so that it was a landmark in our part of the city. No other room has ever seemed to me so enormous as this reception hall.

This sunny spring afternoon, grandmother's big chair had been brought outdoors in one of her infrequent times of relaxation and placed where she could look at her favorite peonies just opening their first wide pink blossoms. We children clustered about her. I remember I was wearing a new red jacket and red trousers of which I was vastly proud.

Grandmother was in an unofficial mood for the moment, leisurely sipping tea out of a fragile porcelain cup served to her by Jem Po, the beautiful slave girl. The two little black dogs played beside her, and on her knee sat the little gray monkey. We called him Little Monk, or more often Little Man, because of his habit of standing erect and reaching out his hands when we offered him cake or fruit, which he would solemnly receive and eat daintily while he was still standing.

I was leaning against grandmother's knee, patting her hands and reaching my hand up her wide sleeves. I loved doing this, and she seemed to like to have me do it, although none of the rest of our family ventured on such familiarity. As Jem Po passed the cakes I took one and offered it to the Little Man, who stood up politely to take it. When he finished the cake he sat down again to scratch his ribs. At this point an idea was born. I took hold of the monkey gently and thrust him swiftly just as far as I could reach up grandmother's wide sleeve.

At once there ensued the greatest clawing, chattering, and snorting. Grandmother, with a convulsive movement of her arm, swept the Little Man out of her sleeve onto the ground. There was first a gray streak as the monkey flashed up grandmother's knee and onto her shoulder, and then a red streak as I dived for the shelter of the nearest pot of peonies, from where I looked out cautiously. The mingled snorting and chattering continued as grandmother and her little monkey voiced their combined surprise and indignation. All the onlookers held their breath.

Grandmother turned from soothing the monkey, and glared at me indignantly.

"Impudent small devil . . . hah . . ." she snorted. I began to fear the worst.

"Come here, Ah Ling . . . hah . . ." she commanded, and I obeyed as she turned again to the little monkey and began to smooth his ruffled fur.

The others let out their breath and Orchid Blossom moved forward to take me away.

"Let her stay . . . hah . . ." said grandmother.

From that time on I was regarded among the children in our household with respect and given the nickname of Dan Da. This is an adjective in common use and means literally "great gall." Looking back, I think the reason I was able to act

this way and live to tell the tale was that I was not afraid of her, and still more that in some way I sensed, behind her austere manner, a kindliness she was forced to cover up in order to maintain her place as virtual ruler of the eighty persons who made up our household and immediate dependents, although I could not fully realize the difficulty of one woman maintaining the order and discipline of our big household and the strain it put on her. It was perhaps this knowledge we shared in common, but which was not quite shared by my mother, that made me her favorite grandchild.

III

Mother and Father

NEXT TO grandmother's room was my mother's, really my parents' room, but I thought of it as hers, for she was much more intimately connected with it than was my father.

What I remember most vividly about my mother is her classical beauty. She had the willow-leaf eyes, crescent eyebrows, rosebud lips, and all the other accessories to loveliness that are rhapsodized over by the most famous poets. But the feature that made the dominant impression was her large and expressive eyes, and my father's usual nickname for her was "Big Eyes."

She spent hours before her mirror, engaged at the point where nature leaves off and art begins. But so subtle was her technique that it only made her beauty seem the more natural and unaffected. She was meticulous and formal in matters of dress. Thus she always put her earrings back on at once after washing her face.

Mother attributed the gloss of her hair and the transparency of her complexion to the powdered pearls that she took at least twice a year all her life. A large part of her dowry was in pearls, which constitute a favorite form of liquid wealth for ladies of her class. She never thought of counting them, but measured them by cupfuls.

She prepared them herself and would first steam them, tying

half a teaspoon of small seed pearls in a clean white cloth and embedding it in rice that had almost finished cooking. Then she would turn a porcelain bowl upside down, place one pearl at a time on the small, rough circle of its base, and grind it carefully with a small, smooth stone. The resulting fine powder was taken mixed with sugar and washed down with rice water. This practice was a commonplace among ladies in families like ours.

She had that air of unsophistication which is the unique product of the sheltered and tranquil life we lived in our woman's world, which was a world within a world. She was our model of a patrician lady. We were all, consciously or unconsciously, proud of her.

My mother herself seemed unaware of this. Perhaps that was her deep charm. The only times I saw any change in her was when my father was with her. Then she glowed from within.

My father, indeed, seemed to me to miss none of this, and when he was in the mood, he used to call her Lady Ko Ko and quote the celebrated poem of the Tang Dynasty about this lady, one of the famous beauties of Chinese history. This verse is known to every schoolboy, and may be entitled "Lady Ko Ko Enters the Palace." It captures the moment when she rode triumphantly through the palace gate on horseback, as Tang ladies used to do in that more robust age, to take her rightful place as the favorite of the emperor.

Lady Ko Ko, summoned rightly,
Rode in as the day dawned brightly,
 Knowing rouge would dim her color,
Merely brushed her eyebrows lightly.

My mother was the pampered only child of a wealthy family

in the clan of Liang, where there were many servants to do all the work. The family ordinarily spent their time playing *ma-chang,* a kind of dominoes, or gambled until midnight, frequently until two o'clock in the morning. My mother used to sleep until noon. Her personal slave girl, Wood Orchid, stayed on guard outside her door. If anyone sought to disturb her, or if there was noise in the vicinity, Wood Orchid would put an immediate stop to it.

"Quiet," she'd hiss. "Our Eldest Young Lady is still asleep."

Indeed, Wood Orchid did far more to assert mother's position in the household than did my languid and gentle mother herself, and was far more impressed with her importance in being mother's personal slave girl than my mother was with her own position. A mousy sort of girl with no special distinguishing characteristics that I can think of, Wood Orchid's whole interest in life seemed to be her service to my mother. She was four years younger, and they were congenial in temperament and genuinely fond of each other, and after Wood Orchid was married she often came back for a visit and brought her children and her sewing. Mother used on occasion to do Wood Orchid's hair, and when she began combing the hair of her new slave girl, a little thing of four, Wood Orchid did not like it at all. She was a quiet girl and did not talk much, which was one of the things my mother particularly liked her for. I was a sad contrast.

"You chatter like a *wu-ya*—'keh-keh-keh, keh-keh-keh,'" mother was always saying to me, imitating our Chinese "parson" crow, a big and noisy bird. "Now run along and play." And Orchid Blossom would carry me off.

It used to seem to me sometimes that mother was always calling for Orchid Blossom to come and take me away, and I liked to be with her. Perhaps the artificial convention of families like ours in having a slave girl for each person came be-

tween us as mother and daughter. Perhaps mother would have liked to do my hair—she did it on a few special occasions, and I had liked it, oh so much—but that and similar intimate services had to be left to Orchid Blossom, who, as a result, was closer to me than mother. Perhaps Confucian formality also contributed.

But perhaps I meant much more to mother than I realized, for I learned when I was much older that her reason for fasting—she always went without breakfast on the first and fifteenth of the month—was in keeping of a vow she had made to Kwan Yin, Goddess of Mercy, when I was dangerously ill as a small child. She kept it religiously all her life, and I like to think of this as something deeper in our relationship than was evident to me at the time.

In our household my mother's life was very different from what it had been in her own home. She found it a great hardship to undergo grandmother's early morning inspection, and was always in silent revolt against it. However, she knew better than to antagonize grandmother.

She had to conform in other ways also. One of the most treasured articles of her dowry was a very beautiful water pipe inlaid with silver. Grandmother promptly took it away from her when she came as a bride, as she did not approve of smoking by the women of the family. My mother, however, had been an incessant smoker for years and was almost sick at this sudden deprivation, so she sent home for another pipe which she had left there. This too was immediately confiscated.

I don't know why grandmother objected to smoking. It was certainly not for any religious or ethical reason, but it probably fell into the same class with one of our most popular sea-food dishes never served to us because a remote ancestor had choked to death on a small shell that stuck in his throat while he was eating it. Drinking alcoholic beverages was also taboo because

another ancestor had smothered after a drinking bout on a cold night when a servant had covered him with a heavy red blanket in which he managed to entangle himself.

This deprivation seriously affected my mother. When guests came to visit her and began to smoke I would see her begin to yawn, and as long as the smoking went on she would yawn and yawn and yawn. Once when I was eight I asked her why she didn't ask grandmother to give back her pipe. She shook her head with a gentle smile of resignation.

"I am not as naughty as you," she said. "I am not Dan Da."

A Chinese daughter-in-law is very much under the thumb of her mother-in-law, but it went beyond that in our family. Mother never gave any definite indication of it, but I feel sure that she was afraid of grandmother. She had plenty of company.

My mother still spent a considerable portion of her daytime hours in sleep. During her naps, Wood Orchid continued her former practice of remaining on duty, and warned her if she heard grandmother's footsteps approaching.

Her room was well adapted for this, for it was a twilight room conducive to sleep in winter and cool in our semitropical summer. Its most conspicuous furnishing was the bed against the inner wall which, when its curtains were down, constituted a spacious room within a room. The uprights supporting the curtains were lacquered in red and adorned with carvings of various flowers, gaily colored, and outlined in black and gold. Other carvings depicted ladies with children gathered around them. The valance along the top was of red silk and had been embroidered by my mother herself with figures and flowers of felicity and a poem in gold lettering. Inside the bed, and near the top at the back, was a shelf on which were three red-painted and carved boxes for the storage of valuables. These were too wide for the shelf and overhung it to such an

extent that, when I was five and occasionally slept with mother when father was away, I was always afraid they might fall and crush us.

The room had doors to the hall and to the back room where Third Sister and I slept with our two slave girls. A double door opened to grandmother's room. There was a window of four latticed panels, in the center of which were carved peonies, lotus, plum blossoms, and bamboo with birds. This was good-looking but very little light could get through it. However there were three glass tiles in the roof through which narrow shafts of sunlight entered during part of the day. The only way to get more light was to open the doors into grandmother's room, where three glass windows—the only glass in our household—allowed the sunlight to stream in from the courtyard.

In this room my mother passed her days, leaving it only to go to the women's dining room or to pay her respects to grandmother or to visit in the rooms of the other ladies, all of which opened off her courtyard or the one just behind it.

She only infrequently went on visits to relatives in the city, and had no curiosity about the world outside. Perhaps this was because she, like grandmother, my two aunts, and my first sister-in-law, had bound feet. Hers were the smallest, of which she was very vain, and it was no accident that she was the one who moved about least.

There were four of us children. Third Brother was six years older than I. Third Sister and Fifth Brother died when I was six.

The chief interruptions in mother's routine were the comings and goings of my father, who was often away on business. She missed him very much, and would turn to her favorite Tang Dynasty poetry. When my father had been on a long trip and was due back she would repeat this one:

Mother and Father

You were so soon gone,
So late in returning.
 Share we now the wine,
Share our ten years' yearning.

I remember one day when a sedan chair was set down in the front courtyard, and here was my father home from a business trip to Hong Kong! Mother could not properly leave the women's apartments to greet him but waited in her own room while he went to pay his respects to grandmother, as he always did the first thing. But grandmother was away this time, visiting her married daughter. Father got right back into his sedan chair and went off across the city to pay his respects to her before greeting anyone else.

As soon as I first saw him I ran to tell mother. I knew she would be very happy and give him a warm welcome although she never expressed this in her face but merely waited quietly, ordering hot tea and warm water to be made ready. This time she waited several hours. I ran every little while to look and listen for his return. But even when he got back and engaged in a long conversation with First Uncle before coming to greet her, she gave no sign of impatience. All this was according to custom, and as it should be.

But between my father and mother, formality and strict etiquette did not get in the way of love. Whenever he finally arrived she served tea to him with her own hands, and never allowed anyone else to do it. She said little, but her gestures and her quiet anticipation of his every need spoke their own language. He seemed to know this, and indeed they seemed to have a deep, quiet understanding of one another. They always had honor and respect for each other. When they spoke to one another I never heard them raise their voices. I liked to be with

them. But after a while my slave girl would always come to take me away.

2

In these days I often wondered why I had seen so little of father when I was small, and began to miss him more when he was away. This I came to understand much later.

Father always wore a stern face. He was really a person of kindly instincts, but when he felt that the situation required him to step into the role of the Confucian father, he could be absolutely uncompromising. Confucianism prescribed the correct attitudes for parents—stern father, compassionate mother. Indeed these two combined, *yen-dzu,* form a term meaning "parents" that is in common use. I never once sat on father's knee, as I did with grandfather and Kiu Kung. The older men seemed mellower. Perhaps the younger ones felt more need of asserting their authority, for all of them conformed to the Confucian stereotype. Thus my uncles and my first brother would never under any circumstances hold one of their babies in their arms. This made me treasure all the more the few times when father was able to unbend and treat me just as a daughter without the formality that marked our ordinary intercourse.

Once he took me with him for a stroll in our orchard of dragon-eye trees. I liked these trees. They had short trunks, and began to branch a little way from the ground, so that the general effect was something like an inverted, partly open umbrella. The bark had big, reptilian scales with lichens in the cracks between and was thick and soft, and we easily peeled it off in thin sheets like paper.

Two of my brothers were climbing the trees and I was immediately seized with the desire to do likewise.

"Let me climb a tree too," I begged.

Father looked at me as if he found it impossible to imagine a girl of our family doing such a thing.

"Oh, please do," I insisted, "please."

He began to smile. "All right, Ah Ling," he said, "but be careful. We had better pick out a little one for you, like this one over here."

It was harder than I expected and I would never have made it if he had not helped me. At length I was safely astride a branch. One of my most precious memories is the picture of my father smiling up at me as I smiled triumphantly down upon him.

When I was on the ground again we looked soberly at each other. We were partners in crime. We both knew that grandmother would scold him far worse than she would me if she ever heard of it. I lost no time in swearing my two brothers to secrecy.

3

Sometimes, when I was a little older, I used to wander into my mother's room and watch her writing her elegantly shaped Chinese characters, which she did at a regular hour every day. She would first compose herself and remain entirely motionless for a quarter-hour or longer before beginning to write, and often repeated to me the words of a celebrated calligraphist: "To write beautifully it is necessary to quiet the heart." I would try to imitate her but always began to squirm long before the time was up.

After this she would turn to the poems of the Tang Dynasty, singing them softly over to herself. I loved to listen although I could understand but little and seldom ventured to ask, but she would at times make a comment or drop a word of explanation. One I heard so many times that I too was able

to repeat it. It was the first poem I learned by heart and I think that it must have been her favorite. It went like this:

Chwin mien puh dzo dzao
Chu chu wen di niao
Yei lai fung yu shen
Hwa loh dzu do shao.

A translation, keeping the same number of syllables, goes as follows:

Sleeping late in spring,
Birds around me sing.
Wonder if night's storm
Did my flowers much harm.

The largest part of her time went into embroidery. She specialized in butterflies and birds and had the reputation of doing the most beautiful and delicate embroidery in our city. There were always some young women preparing to be married who came to her at fixed times to learn the art. She was extremely patient in teaching them and they took great pride in being her pupils. She had a special liking for Ni Niang, our sewing woman, and often sent for her to bring her work and sit for a while. Each year in the fifth month, they and First Sister-in-Law made packets of sweet herbs that were hung up by us children and sent as gifts in connection with the spring festival.

I liked best to tiptoe in when the red candles were burning before the lovely bronze statuette of the gracious and beautiful Kwan Yin, the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy, and the fragrant smoke of incense ascended in slow spirals while my mother, with hands palm to palm, would first bow low with her forehead to the floor, and then look up, with a rapt expression, as she made her petition to the goddess or repeated her devotions. Sometimes she would ask me to kneel beside her and take part.

I did not like to do this although I cannot say why, and I used to wonder why she spent so much time talking to a bronze image on a shelf. I liked to watch and listen although I did not know what she was saying. I never learned.

Each of the ladies in our household had a Kwan Yin in her room. She was the patron goddess of our woman's world. But that of my mother was the most beautiful. Before it were two brass candlesticks, two vases of flowers, and an incense burner. In front of these were five dishes of wax fruit: tangerines, pears, apples, peaches and carambolas—a greenish fruit, with triangular longitudinal sections and a pleasantly acid flavor.

The Goddess of Mercy is the most popular of the Bodhisattvas that are characteristic of the Mahayana form of Buddhism which prevails in China and Japan. This Bodhisattva was a male in India, which was his original home. There he was known as Avalokitesvara. But after some centuries in China as a male, he became a goddess. Why? Possibly under Tantric influence. Nobody knows exactly. One is tempted to venture the speculation that the penetration of a male deity into the secluded inner apartments and the most intimate devotions of their fair denizens so outraged Confucian propriety that the Bodhisattva found it expedient to become a goddess.

We all felt that Kwan Yin was somehow more personal. The ceremonials of ancestor worship before the altar in the reception hall were corporate, clan affairs, and restricted to the males of the family. The Goddess of Mercy belonged to each of us individually. This was the gift of personal religion which Buddhist missions had brought to China. It was not merely that she was the giver of sons. She was "The One That Sees and Hears." This was something of our own that we did not find elsewhere. Perhaps, as Chinese women, with our dependent status in the clan, we felt in special need of a divine compassion.

I used to look at the beautiful face of my mother's Kwan

Yin in the soft candlelight, and hope to be like her, for it is commonly said of a beautiful girl that she has the face of Kwan Yin.

IV

Aunts and Uncles

NEXT TO my parents' room was that of First Uncle and First Aunt, a larger room at the inner end of the court, as was fitting for the eldest son.

First Aunt was a colorless individual, short, thin, and emaciated. She worked hard and always seemed inclined to tuberculosis although she lived to be over sixty. She was honest, simple, and humble, with no pride or self-assertion. She had not come from a very good home. Her family were small shopkeepers, and she had nine brothers and six sisters. Consequently she had a very small dowry. This was most evident in her clothing, most of which was now so old that she ordinarily looked a bit shabby, indeed more like a servant than one of the ladies of a family like ours. She had brought no slave girl with her as a part of her dowry, which in the city of Kan San involved a distinct loss of face both for her and her family. Grandmother bought a girl for her from a very poverty-stricken family, to look after her room, be her personal servant, and stand behind her chair at meals to wait on her. First Aunt was very particular about this matter of being waited on.

First Uncle, who was eleven years older than my father, was married when the family was only at the beginning of the large increase in wealth which grandfather had achieved in his later years, and grandmother was not in a position then to

secure a wife for him from a family of anything like the standing of those of my mother and third aunt. Furthermore it seems likely that she was more concerned in getting a daughter-in-law who could be helpful about the house and assist her, than in securing a fitting wife for First Uncle.

First Aunt was a good housekeeper and always used to inspect after the slave girls had finished a washing and hung it out to dry on the bamboo poles which served as clotheslines. She usually went around with a threaded needle stuck in her hair knot and if she found a tear or a frayed corner she would mend it at once. This was a carry-over from the days when grandmother had only one or two women servants and they had to do things of this sort themselves. First Uncle often tried to dissuade her, but she clung stubbornly to the routine grandmother had assigned to her as a bride, which indeed was the only thing she knew, and as our family increased in wealth and prestige First Uncle became more and more openly contemptuous of her.

I suppose it must have hurt his pride deeply to compare her with my mother and Third Aunt. We often heard him scolding her. Perhaps he even beat her at times. She never made a sound in reply. She should have had a position in the household next to grandmother in authority, but his treatment of her made that impossible and relegated her to a subordinate and humiliating place. However, she did not fully realize this, largely because of grandmother's backing and encouragement, and she put far more emphasis on her filial duty to her husband's mother than on her personal relationship to the husband himself.

"Give me your commands, mother-in-law," she would say almost daily. "I am here to serve you."

And thus she comforted herself, if indeed she felt any need of comfort, and demonstrated by unselfish hard work that she

was above reproach in this highest of Confucian requirements.

They had seven children, my first, second, and seventh brothers and first, second, fifth, and sixth sisters. First Brother was married and had two children, who formed our fourth generation, a girl, little Toto, and a baby boy. The children of my first and third uncles were of course my cousins, but the same terms—elder or younger brother or sister—were applied to all of us, and we had serial numbers in order of seniority. These constituted the names we ordinarily called each other. I was Chih Mei—Seventh Younger Sister—to all those older in my generation.

First Uncle was a model filial son but no model husband. He knew that grandmother had a perfect right to get the kind of wife for him that would be of most service to herself, but that did not make him satisfied with the woman who had been chosen for him and introduced into his bed sight unseen. Perhaps that was why he brought home a Malay concubine from one of his first trips to Java, and installed her in our household without giving previous notice or asking the consent of either his wife or mother as both custom and courtesy required.

This concubine was a dim and shadowy figure in our household. She dressed in her Malay fashion with white jacket and colorful sarong of a pattern that seemed bizarre to us. This, with her darker color, her bare, unbound feet, and the fact that she never learned to speak more than a few words of Chinese, gave her a certain alien and indeed barbaric aspect. At first she and her daughter shared a room with Ni Niang, our sewing woman. Later, when Ni Niang left, she had the room to herself. She kept busy in her leisurely way with sewing and household duties, but principally in looking after Toto, the spoiled little granddaughter of First Uncle.

She was outwardly easygoing and simple-minded and not concerned, so far as we could see, over her anomalous position

in our family. I would often see her sitting motionless in the doorway of her room with a faraway look in her eyes, and I used to stand and watch her and wonder what strange sights she was seeing. I was more than a little in awe of her and kept my distance because of the stories of men who had been bewitched by Malay girls they had married in Java and had never come back to their wives in China. I wondered if she had bewitched First Uncle. However, he never entered her room, and so far as I remember, I never once saw him talking to her. This puzzled me a great deal, but she appeared to accept the situation with a sort of primitive dignity that perhaps amounted to fatalism. All this cut her off from the rest of us, although she ate at the table with the ladies of the family and was treated by them with courtesy.

First Aunt was indifferent toward her but always kind. She seemed to take it for granted that uncle would require a companion when he was away from home on business, particularly in foreign lands, but it never occurred to her that she might accompany him, and she was fond of quoting the dictum attributed to the mother of the philosopher Mencius: "A woman's duty is to care for the household and she should have no desire to go abroad."

2

On the other side of the courtyard lived Third Uncle and Third Aunt. The latter was handsome, a smooth talker, and had society manners. She came from a wealthy family and brought with her a huge dowry, chiefly in jewelry and flashy clothes, which she paraded in a dashing manner. Grandmother's idea was to put the clothes on her slave girls. Third Aunt preferred to wear them herself, which, however, did not prevent her from having two personal slave girls, chosen for

looks and style, and arrayed and bedizened in a manner that our quiet household considered beyond the limits of good taste. I often noticed grandmother's eyes following Third Aunt as she breezed in and out, her face getting longer and more grim. But she never said anything. Indeed Third Aunt gave her nothing of which she could complain, for she was punctilious in all the formal courtesies of the household, contriving to carry them off with an éclat that was the envy of the rest of us. We did not see very much of her, for she was often away for prolonged visits in the homes of her wealthy friends or back home sleeping it off. All this was in sharp contrast with the effortless elegance of my mother but it was combined with genuine goodness of heart.

Third Uncle and Third Aunt were well matched. He was very intelligent, clever in business deals, and always extremely polite while managing at the same time to get his own way. He always put his own interest ahead of loyalty to the clan. First Uncle was just the opposite, and their conflicting characters weakened our family in later years.

They had four children, my fourth, sixth, and eighth brothers and my fourth sister. These, of course, were more cousins.

Fourth Uncle married at sixteen, died at seventeen, and his wife a year later, when I was two. They had no children. But Fourth Uncle was to reappear later—by proxy—and cause considerable complication.

3

Four women servants and the seventeen slave girls made up the rest of our woman's world. Tse Sao was cook and head servant. She worked all day in the kitchen with her assistants and had an apron on from morning to night. She was about thirty, a fat, red-cheeked, frowzy-haired country woman. She

was patient and humble-minded, liked to work with the kettles and pans, and at midnight did her own sewing. She was devout, and as head servant was responsible for the ghostly welfare of the household, as contrasted with the clan. She never failed to keep candle or incense burning before the shrine of the kitchen god, nor did she overlook the proper offerings to the other spirits, such as those of the well and the gate.

It was the style for ladies like mother and Third Aunt to have three slave girls: a personal maid, a girl for the lighter work around the living quarters, and a drudge for the kitchen and heavy work. Thus there tended to be three groups among the servants and slave girls: handsome and clever ones like Jem Po, Summer Lotus, Approaching Happiness, or Beautiful Plum Blossom; stupid and ill-favored ones like Jen Sung; and a group in between.

Three men servants had a place in our woman's world to do the heavy work. Sui Te drew water from the well and carried it to all the places in our house and adjoining shops where it was needed. Nung Nung carried the hot food from the kitchen to our dining rooms, to the shops, and to those who wished to eat in their own rooms, also the tea that was consumed by everybody at all hours, and he had special responsibility for the schoolroom. Li Chi Ko had charge of the hulling of rice, the sorting and packing of dragon-eyes and lychees, and all the special tasks going on in the workrooms in the back yard during a large part of the year in which all servants and slave girls had to help as it was necessary and as their other tasks permitted. These men slept in our adjoining shops.

In a crowded establishment like ours the life that we lived was public. I was scarcely ever alone, day or night. This is in accord with the gregarious nature of the Chinese people. It conditioned us to life in society, and is perhaps the basis of

our Chinese social-mindedness. Yet in our pack of children who played together, personal likes and dislikes were frequent, uninhibited, and effective.

It is not an easy thing for so many people to live closely together. It calls for a practical pattern, which is provided by Confucianism, and for strict discipline, which was furnished by grandmother. We accepted all this as a matter of course, and indeed knew nothing else.

V

A Chinese Childhood

THERE WERE sixteen of us children when I was six. We varied in age from twenty-two to four. Eight were boys: one brother, six cousins, and a nephew. Eight were girls: five cousins, a niece, the daughter of the Malay concubine, who was a shy shadow from the South Seas rather than a person, and, of course, myself.

Three smaller ones were cry-babies and fraidy-cats, to be taken care of by their personal slave girls. We called them cry-devils and night-mice—the entire term is "night-mice-afraid-of-the-cat." The five oldest ones held themselves aloof, the girls thinking secretly of marriage, the boys already eating in the men's dining room, sleeping in the school courtyard, and very conscious of their new dignity and status. Indeed this so formalized our relationships that after my first and second brothers reached this age I never took a seat in their presence unless they invited me to do so.

2

I was a chubby child then and my face was round and my cheeks plump. My eyes were deep-set in creases of fat that made them look very small. As a result my sisters used to tease me and called me "shrimp-eyes."

In this Second Sister took the lead. She was a very pretty

TABLE OF OUR FAMILY
(When I was six years old)

U = uncle B = brother S = sister *children of 1st B

Generation					*Age*
15th	Grand-mother			Kiu Kung	57 51
16th	1st U **				40
		2nd (my father)			29
			3rd U		27
				4th U	dead
17th	1st S				21
	2nd S				21
	1st B				20
	2nd B				19
		3rd S			dead
		3rd B			12
				4th S	12
			4th B		11
	5th S				9
		5th B			dead
			6thB		8
	7th B				7
	6th S				6
		7th S (myself)			6
18th	*Toto				
			8th B		5
	*Boy				3

** Aunt who had married into another clan

and vivacious girl, but was considered a bit stupid by our family, which was perhaps why she failed to understand the pain that all this caused me. She was more than repaid for it later.

"Shrimp-eyes certainly doesn't look at all like her father," she would say. And another would echo it.

"She doesn't even look like her mother."

Then the others would chime in.

"She must have been adopted."

"She was brought by the midwife, if you ask me."

"I believe she is really the midwife's daughter."

On one such occasion they brought me a mirror.

"Look at your little shrimp's eyes," said Second Sister, "then go and look at your mother's big ones. You can see for yourself that you are not her daughter."

This seemed conclusive. I ran away and hid, and wept bitterly. For a long time I was certain that I was not my mother's daughter.

My distress was greatly intensified when our old witch of a midwife entered gleefully into this cruel joke.

"Come along, Miss Seven," she would call out whenever she caught sight of me. "I have come to take you back."

I would be terrified and run and hide.

Her family had a matting shop in the next block, and she was a tremendous talker, with a continuous running cackle of laughter at her own gossip, and liked to visit with cook and the older servants, so she often dropped in. It got so that I was constantly on the alert for her coming. She seemed always to have a heel loose on one shoe, and as she shuffled along it would go "ih-no-ih-sih, ih-no-ih-sih," and I would run. The sound still makes me shudder.

I was afraid to ask my mother about this for fear she would be angry. I did venture, however, to ask grandmother.

"Second Sister says the midwife is my real mother," I told her anxiously.

"They are just teasing you, Ah Ling," she said, dismissing me with a wave of her hand. "Now run along and play."

But I was still afraid.

This went on for about two years. Of course this worry was not constantly with me, only when someone teased me, when it became acute for a while but was soon forgotten in my myriad interests and activities in our big household. When it did come up, I was less concerned over my relationship to my mother—which was not as close as with Orchid Blossom or grandmother—than with the fear of being taken away from my family.

I finally escaped from this fear one day when I heard my mother telling a guest about her difficulties in connection with my birth. She had wanted to send for the midwife the previous night. But calling a doctor or midwife after dark involved sending a sedan chair and a servant or slave girl they knew, so they could be sure this was not a ruse to kidnap them, and everyone was so busy that mother felt timid about asking grandmother and causing so much trouble. As she finished her story, she smilingly put her hand on my head.

"So you can see," she said, "what a hard time I had bringing this daughter of mine into the world."

Then the light broke. I had heard her tell about my birth before but had not really grasped until now that it actually referred to me.

3

We played a few simple games, chiefly with a sort of shuttlecock, made by fastening feathers to the thin coin with a square hole in it known as a "cash," and kicked upward with the heel. The game was to see who could keep it in the air the longest, the number of kicks constituting the score.

We had few playthings. We made dolls out of our pillows,

which were a foot and a half long and some four or five inches thick. An apron served as a dress, and Sixth Brother made faces out of the rinds of halved pomelos, which are like grapefruits, only larger and sweeter, cutting out eyes and teeth in realistic fashion. Mother used to make us small rag dolls stuffed with cotton and drew pretty faces with her brush-pen. We occasionally had small clay dishes, but they were more sorrow than joy, for they broke easily and made their owners cry. We also had some more durable doll furniture of bamboo. One new year's day our maternal grandmother sent us toy drums, gongs, and cymbals, which added wonderfully to the festivity of the occasion.

This lesser emphasis on toys led us to depend more on pets, and we had a large population of animals and birds, for grandmother was fond of them. In the back yard were chickens, ducks, geese, pigs, and a pair of goats. These were excluded from our courtyards, but could go along a back passage to our dragon-eye orchard, where they foraged, rooted, butted, and quacked to their hearts' content. Sixth Brother had a way with all the pets. He was always getting our roosters to cock-fight, and usually had the champion fighting cricket in the spring. He fastened a sort of whistle on our pigeons, which made an eerie sound when they flew.

There were also rabbits in bamboo cages, one rabbit to a cage, piled up in the shelter of the eaves, one above another, in a sort of rabbit apartment house. These belonged to the slave girls, except for several large ones on the top row that were the property of Kiu Kung, the steward. One, in the bottom row that I could reach, all white with a black spot behind its ear, was my special pet and joy. I used to feed it every day with rice and with rabbit weed that I picked in the orchard, and then take it out of its cage to play. Once when there was a storm I found the rain had driven into the cage so that the

rabbit was wet and shivering. I took it into my room, where Orchid Blossom and I wiped it dry, although its wet fur gave off a rank smell. As it continued to shiver, I took it to bed with me, but made Orchid Blossom promise not to tell mother. However, she came in a little later.

"Five Emperors!" she exclaimed, "what is it that smells so? I believe one of you girls has a rabbit in here. Where is it?"

I turned back my quilt and showed the little creature sleeping peacefully, and prepared to be scolded, but my mother began to laugh.

"My dear Ling Ling," she said, "if you want to sleep with a rabbit, it is perfectly all right with me. But just one thing. You must go out and sleep with the rabbit in the courtyard and not bring it in here."

Kiu Kung would not let us play with his rabbits for fear we would injure them. Grandmother's little dog, Black Dragon, got mine one day and tore it so that it died in spite of my devoted nursing. I buried it with tears.

Our family did not use the rabbits as food, but the slave girls were fond of eating them and kept them for that reason. Cook would not have anything to do with this, so the girls prepared them separately. I used to come and watch, and they always gave me some, which I liked very much, but they made me promise not to tell mother or grandmother.

Our favorite pets were beetles. Our sewing woman, Ni Niang, had a son eleven years old who was an apprentice in one of our shops and came every evening to pay his filial respects and bid her good night. During the summer he would climb the lychee trees and bring us the beetles that were industriously engaged in destroying our crop. These had a shell of a beautiful green color. We would fasten a fine linen thread to the hind leg of a beetle and, an inch from this, a tiny piece of red paper and, after another inch, a sliver of white porce-

lain. Thus weighted on one side, the beetle would fly in circles while we held the end of the thread. We children each had one all through the season and the brilliant circling colors were an unending source of fascination and pleasure. When they tired we would offer them a drop of tea and at night anchored them to jasmine leaves so that they could drink the dew. Unfortunately, a beetle lasted only a day or two, but Ni Niang's son kept us supplied.

4

I was fond of slipping out through the back courtyard and watching the slave girls at work under the direction of Li Chi Ko in a large shed without a door. Sometimes they were sorting dragon-eyes and lychees from our orchard and packing them in cardboard boxes with red paper labels. The dragon-eye is a lemon-colored nut with a very thin shell and a large, round pit thinly covered with a white, succulent pulp. The lychee has a soft, reddish-brown shell, and a thicker white pulp with an exotic taste and odor.

Generally they were hulling rice in ten stone mortars set in the clay floor, with stone pestles fastened at the end of a beam which rose as a slave girl stood on the other end, and fell as she stepped off to release it. I liked to see the pestles rising and falling in a row and the slave girls all bobbing up and down. There were also five fanning mills of semimodern design. Before I reached the courtyard I could always hear them going "pong-pong, pong-pong," and "hi-hu, hi-hu."

One day they were silent, and when I reached the shed I could see nobody but Li Chi Ko, who was there alone cleaning the mills and singing. He had a high voice and was more like a woman, but with a large body, big bones and strong muscles like a man. He never married and grandmother said he was

part man and part woman. He was simple, had no initiative, and continued as our servant all his life. He was always smiling at anyone who happened to be present, or to himself if alone.

"What are you singing about, Li Chi Ko?" I asked.

"Oh! Miss Seven, are you back again?"

"I am here. You can see for yourself," I replied pertly. "But I ask you, what are you singing about?"

"I am singing about the twelve handkerchiefs."

"Will you sing it from the beginning, please?" I said.

He cleared his throat and began a folksong commonly sung by girls, a popular ballad in doggerel:

> The first kerchief peonay—
> Our twelfth sister is O.K.
> Eighteen and not married yet,
> Wonder what man she will get.

"That song is for girls," I teased him, "you are a man interested in girls."

"But I like this song very much," he answered, and began to sing the other handkerchiefs, each supposed to be embroidered with a different flower:

> Second kerchief apricot—
> Marry young man. Old man not.
> Youth can understand love's arts,
> Younger men have younger hearts.

So the sad tale proceeded of the girl who was tricked by the go-between and found herself married to an old man:

> Seventh kerchief lobster—Fie!
> Someone told a whopping lie.

Young men all make eyes at me,
But I wed senility.

The eighth kerchief is sun flow'r—
Gold and silver make my dower.
But still I bemoan my fate,
It is most unfortunate.

5

Grandmother kept a vigilant eye on all at mealtimes, particularly on us children who ate at two eight-fairy tables (our name for the square table seating eight people) in the women's dining room off the third courtyard, boys at one, girls at the other, with our individual slave girls standing behind our chairs to help us. She insisted that rice must be eaten down to the last grain in the bowl. Likewise each grain dropped on the tabletop. Even grains dropped on the floor had to be carefully picked up by the one who dropped them, and fed to the chickens.

"The thunder comes looking for bad children who waste food . . . hah," she would warn us, "so be careful . . . hah!"

And when it thundered she would remind us:

"Who has been wasting rice . . . hah? The thunder is after someone."

This frightened us very much. Especially me. I used to run to the storeroom and hide.

6

I had no slightest fear of any animal, or of any human, except, for a while, our old midwife, but I have been afraid of ghosts all my life. I still am. Perhaps I have come by this naturally as a part of the atmosphere of superstition the Confucian

system permitted to linger on, even in scholarly families like ours, alongside its more rationalistic philosophy. But this fear was greatly intensified by our slave girls and particularly by the ghost stories which they fervently believed and were always telling, and went on telling and believing even after we became Christians.

The slave girls represented a religious stratum in our household more primitive than the Buddhist devotions of our ladies or the ancestor worship of our clan, and embodied beliefs that had persisted with little change for thousands of years. Their ghost stories, like the following, always remain as some of the most vivid memories of these early years.

One evening, shortly before bedtime, Sixth Sister and I made our way to a room where a number of the slave girls slept. Sixth was my cousin, her father being First Uncle, but she was only a few days older, so we were like twins, and had recently begun to do everything together. Peony, one of mother's slave girls, was just beginning a ghost story. A single dim light burned on a stand, and we could barely see the faces of the others who filled the room. Peony waited while they crowded over to make room for us. She was our best storyteller and was not one to continue unless she had the undivided attention of her hearers.

"Now I will begin over," she said, speaking in a low, husky voice.

"Once upon a time a solitary traveler was making his way along a lonely road at sunset and began to look for a place to pass the night. He was a homeless man, a wanderer in search of the magic formula for the prolongation of life and the attainment of immortality. Just as he was about to be overtaken by darkness he came upon a temple. The door was open, and he entered and looked about. There was only one large room, deserted except for the gaudily painted images looming above

him in the fading light. There was no place to sleep, but this did not bother him because he was indifferent to all the comforts of life. He found some straw in one corner and, shaking it up to form a couch, lay down upon it.

"He was already half asleep when he saw a light approaching and soon a young man came in carrying a small paper lantern. He seemed familiar with the place and put his lantern on the table before the images of the gods and sat down on a stool in front of it. He did not notice the wanderer who was hidden in the shadows in his corner. From inside his gown he brought out a package of money. This he proceeded to count carefully. When he had finished he seemed lost in thought for a while. Then he picked up the money and counted it once more. When this was completed he took his head in his hands and groaned. And thus he stayed motionless for a long while.

"The wanderer looked on but made no move to reveal himself, for he was a solitary seeker and had no wish for human companionship.

"Suddenly, as if attracted by the groans of the young man, a face peered furtively past the edge of the half-open door and, seeing that the young man's back was turned, advanced itself stealthily and little by little until the whole was visible. It was the face of a young woman, with her long hair hanging wet and disordered, the terrible face of a corpse, distorted, pale, with a greenish tint, and a long red tongue hanging down over its chin."

Peony here thrust her own distorted face closer to the light as she paused dramatically, and a shudder ran through her listeners. I know it did through me. Peony continued:

"The wanderer, although he was familiar with demons, could not help a feeling of fear as the girl, after a quick glance around, stepped inside the door, her movements making no slightest sound. He could now see that she was a slender young woman in a bedraggled red jacket and red trousers, who

looked as if she had just emerged from some stagnant pond where she had drowned herself.

"She stood for a long moment watching the young man intently. Then again she looked quickly around, but still did not notice the traveler in his dark corner. Then, step by step, she stealthily came up behind the young man, who continued lost in painful reverie. For a while she stood close behind him with her head bent, and seemed to be listening to his thoughts. Then, as she heard him groan again, she glided swiftly up to him and knelt by his side.

"He paid no attention. He could not see her. The wanderer looking on from his corner, however, was able to see her because he was a Taoist and knew the ways of demons. She whispered urgently in the ear of the young man, again and again. The Taoist onlooker, through his magic art, was able to understand what she was saying."

Peony paused to sip tea. Then she spoke in her husky whisper:

"She was urging the young man to hang himself.

"When he still paid no attention she got down on her knees before him. She clasped her hands and begged him with tears to do what she wished.

"What she wanted was clearly evident to the Taoist onlooker. She was the spirit of some unhappy girl who had been driven to suicide or who had perhaps been foully murdered and now wanted to secure a body into which she could enter and thus return to the realm of human beings. If she could do so as a man rather than as a woman, that would be all the better.

"The young man once more picked up his package of money and counted it. He fell again into thought. The demon, seeing that he was paying no attention to her, arose, looked at him mournfully, and hesitatingly went out.

"For a while everything was silent. Then the demon re-

appeared. Once more she glided to the side of the young man. Once more she whispered in his ear, beseeching him to kill himself. Once more she knelt before him.

"The young man now appeared to give heed to her words. The girl came closer, whispering more urgently, more desperately. He stood up. The girl peered into his face, which now seemed pale and lifeless like her own. He took off his girdle. The demon beside him began to laugh horribly, laughing and crying at the same time.

"She helped him climb upon the table. She aided him to tie one end of his girdle to a rafter. She saw to it that when he knotted the girdle about his throat it was tied tight. He did not know that she was helping him. Then she got up on the table behind him, ready to push him off."

As she told the story Peony acted it out, and at this point climbed onto a bench, and we could almost see the young man standing before her as she raised her hands to give him the fatal shove.

Just then the door opened and grandmother looked in. She grasped the situation at a glance and spoke sharply to Peony.

"Have I not warned you not to tell ghost stories and scare these children into fits?" she demanded.

Peony hung her head as the others hastily slipped out. Grandmother called to me and Sixth Sister to come along with her and go to bed.

I was afraid to go to sleep and lay awake for a long while and when finally sleep overtook me I dreamed of a red-clad demon who was behind me ready to give me a push, and woke up screaming. It was quite a while before my slave girl could get me quieted and back to sleep again.

It was several days before we had a chance to hear the end of the story. It seemed that just at this juncture the Taoist onlooker pronounced a magic formula, and when the startled

demon heard it she immediately vanished. He then mounted the table, tapped the young man on the shoulder, and carefully helped him to untie his girdle and assisted him down. The young man appeared like one awakening from a dream, and when the wanderer asked him for an explanation he did not seem to have any clear idea of what had happened. The Taoist thereupon asked him to sit down and tell him his trouble. It seemed that he had borrowed money for a business venture and had failed. He had to repay the loan the next day but his money was not nearly enough. Therefore he had considered committing suicide. It was this that had provided the opportunity for the spirit of the unfortunate girl.

The young man took the Taoist with him to his home for the night. The next morning they went together to talk the matter over with his creditor and arranged for an extension of the loan. As a result of this kindly help the young man himself became a Taoist, and when his creditor learned this he canceled the debt. Thereupon the young man went off with the Taoist and entered upon the wandering life.

Of all the many ghosts with which Peony's stories peopled the shadows of the night and of my dreams, this one haunted me most persistently—the horrible, pathetic, red-clad figure of the girl who might at any moment emerge from the shadows and pounce on me to tear me from my body and seize upon it for her own use. Indeed I have not been able to shake off its effect to this day, and when the matron in our American college dormitory died, I used to climb three flights of stairs to my room rather than ride alone in the self-service elevator she had habitually used and so run the risk of encountering her ghost. Apparently it requires several generations to get this sort of thing out of one's system.

7

We had a happy time in this women's world of my childhood, in our patrician family behind its bamboo curtain, with its ghosts, its superstitions, its Confucian rigidity.

Among the peasantry, Chinese women have much more freedom to go in and out. Their life is, in the nature of the case, more open. Their much smaller and simpler dwellings make impossible the degree of seclusion that was maintained in a gentry family like ours.

This seclusion of the feminine portion of our household gave it a calm and sheltered aspect, and developed a psychology of naturalness and trust. We were always among friends. We had never been rebuffed. To this was added the courtesy and deference with which we were treated by slave girls and servants. We were a happy family of extroverts.

We fitted into a fixed framework of generation and seniority, to which we conformed without question. This really gave an added freedom, for we had no need to assert ourselves or to strive for position or leadership. That was settled in advance.

We knew no other world than this. Indeed it was not until I entered college that I began to be conscious of its limitations. It was a tranquil existence in spite of our minor frights and complications. Those who emerge from it tend to be somewhat self-conscious in the outside world of new and strange relationships. And often miss it.

The small family, as I have since come in contact with it, especially in Christian circles, gives a closer and deeper intimacy, and less of Confucian formality. Its lack of fixed status is a challenge to the development of the individual. It produces a new kind of personality.

Our world embodied those elements of strength which have enabled the Confucian system to survive for over twenty cen-

turies. Take the matter of sex, which is always a potential source of complications. Sexual indifference extends only to brothers and sisters, and not to the cousins and slave girls who were nevertheless thrown together in one household, but our somewhat Puritanical way of life was ordered by strict rules which no one thought of disobeying.

It is a well-known Confucian dictum that when men and women have to pass things to each other their fingers must not touch. With us, clothing belonging to the opposite sex could not be hung in the same closet or on the same bamboo pole to dry. We girls were not allowed to sit on a seat that had recently been vacated by a man.

The women kept to their own rooms or visited each other in the kitchen or somewhere in the inner courtyards, and even slave girls were not allowed to go outside the gate for shopping or calling on their friends. If one of the ladies wished to visit a friend or relative, she had first to get permission from grandmother and was required to go in a closed sedan chair. When friends came to visit, she entertained them in her own apartment.

The men had their own strict rules. They had a common toilet in the back yard, while the women had covered wooden buckets in their own rooms that were emptied by servants. But the men in passing to and fro looked neither to right nor left, and it was taboo to look at any women who might be visible in the courtyards as they went through. This was strictly observed.

At mealtimes men and women were separated. The men ate in a room just back of the reception hall, the women in one next to the kitchen. Men ate first, women next, and servants and slave girls last. Male guests were entertained in the reception hall by a man servant in the absence of the men of the family, until some of them got home.

As small children, boys and girls played together, but after one of my brothers celebrated his ninth birthday he was no longer allowed to play as before with his sisters and female cousins. Although he might on occasion join in our activities, we saw him after that largely in a more formal way.

In all this there was no special reference to sex. Such matters were taken for granted and dealt with casually, as a matter of course, and according to custom. We were not sex-conscious.

8

Their own circumspect behavior was not the only thing the ladies in a household like ours had to watch, for the beautiful and clever ones among the slave girls were always potential competition for the gentry wives. One of the simplest ways for a slave girl to better herself was to gain the attention of one of the men of the household and become his concubine. This opened the way to affluence and ease, and happened more than once in households of our relatives that were not so strictly supervised as ours; and even we had our troubles. A wife was expected to be on the alert and so to order her household as to safeguard her own position.

At times we children rubbed elbows with complications that were causing headaches to our elders. One day Sixth Sister and I were playing peek-a-boo with the slave girl Approaching Happiness. She was one of our prettiest slave girls, with a pale, pointed face, big eyes, and vivid lips that were always smiling as if in harmony with her name. When her turn came she hid behind a door, and just at that moment First Brother passed through, carrying a gun in his hand that he had been cleaning. Sixth Sister and I immediately stopped playing, but had no way of telling the girl on the other side of the door what had happened. Hearing footsteps, she jumped out right in front of him.

"Peek-a-boo," she cried, realizing too late who it was.

He started back, half raising the gun in his hand, which gave the girl a scare. For a moment they confronted each other. First Brother, like his father, was usually very particular about his dignity, but when he saw who it was he just grinned. The girl stood for an instant, widening her eyes at him and faintly smiling, then walked demurely away, glancing back at him over her shoulder.

My sister-in-law did not treat this girl as well as she did the others. Perhaps because she thought my brother was becoming interested in her.

A couple of months later I went into the back yard with Orchid Blossom and Summer Lotus, and here was Approaching Happiness talking to a young man whom I remembered seeing there before.

"Look," whispered Summer Lotus, "there is that young fellow from our pawnshop again. She always hangs around when he comes. Those two are going to get into trouble."

The pair saw us and started hastily away, but Summer Lotus called the girl back.

"Don't let cook catch you making eyes at that young man," she told her warningly. "You better keep out of sight when he is here."

But it turned out that cook had already noticed—grandmother counted on her as head servant to watch out for this sort of thing—for the very next morning when I was in grandmother's room she came to report.

Grandmother listened grimly. I wondered whether she knew about Approaching Happiness making eyes at First Brother or whether cook would mention it.

"His family have already arranged for his marriage, of course," she remarked.

Cook replied in the affirmative.

"Then we can no longer take responsibility for the girl.

Send word to her mother to come and take her home, and tell the manager of the pawnshop to send someone else here until the girl is gone."

"Surely Lao Tai Tai remembers," said cook, placatingly, "that the girl's mother is one of her former slave girls and has sent her daughter here because she wants her to get the same training. It will hurt her feelings if we send her back now. Can we not find some other way?"

Grandmother thought it over.

"Her mother was one of my best slave girls," she said at length, "and I should be sorry to make her lose face. Let's see what we can think up."

"Another thing, Lao Tai Tai," said cook, even more placatingly. "I have inquired, and that young man is the only one who can do certain things that have to be done, and will probably have to come from time to time."

"Then keep them apart," said grandmother shortly.

So happiness ceased to approach, for in China a betrothal is as binding as marriage, and such a situation was sure to result in complications.

Cook did not say anything as to First Brother's possible interest in the girl, which she certainly knew about. That was First Sister-in-Law's business, not cook's. She was expected to look out for herself.

That was her individual responsibility, but it also involved the "face" of our family and clan.

9

I had never realized fully the rigidity of this sex separation until one day as I was nearing the end of childhood I heard First Aunt and my mother talking about my grandfather, who had been dead for several years. Aunt told how she had built

up a picture of him based upon his voice, which she heard almost daily, although she never saw him.

"His voice was so bright and strong that I always thought of him as big and fat and powerful," she said. "Then when it came my turn to make my bow and knock my head in front of him before he was put into the coffin, I thought that it would not be impolite, seeing that he was dead, for me to take a good look at him."

First Aunt paused as if the picture were fresh before her eyes.

"There he was, sitting in an armchair in his official robe embroidered with golden dragons, just like life. It gave me a shock. And he was not at all as I had imagined him. He was a tall, thin man with a white beard on his pointed chin."

My mother nodded understandingly. "It was just the same with me," she said. "I expected to see a dead man, but he looked alive, sitting there that way, and not at all what I had thought he would be like."

It seemed almost incredible that they had lived in the same house with grandfather for years and in daily sound of his voice, yet had gone as brides into their own rooms and had never appeared outside them when he was present.

I remembered, however, that once when we were in one of the workrooms off the back courtyard, mother had heard First Uncle coming that way, which he very seldom did, and had run for the door, and whisked from one back room to another until she had regained her own apartment, quite out of breath. I had not known that she could move so fast on her tiny bound feet.

"But did you not see him at the time of your wedding when you and First Uncle bowed to him?" I asked First Aunt.

My mother laughed. "We were both too shy and flustered to look at anybody. Besides, it is the proper thing for the bride

to keep her eyes fixed on the floor and not look at any of the people at her wedding ceremony, and then when she puts on the Dragon Crown headdress, the red silk gauze veil which hangs down to her waist makes it impossible to see things very clearly anyway. I never saw him either."

"But," I persisted, "every morning and night you went to grandmother's room to pay your respects. Grandfather shared the same room. How could you miss seeing him?"

"He always left when he heard us coming," said First Aunt. "Perhaps he knew our voices or our footsteps."

"Perhaps," said my mother, "grandmother told him that a daughter-in-law was coming."

I thought about the other possibilities of contact. Both attended various weddings and funerals where it would seem that they would inevitably catch a glimpse of each other. But not so. Women usually went earlier and made a stay of several days. Even if they came when men were present, their closed sedan chairs would be set down at the door to the inner apartments into which they immediately vanished. Nor was it considered good form for the men to look at them. They politely turned their heads the other way.

I looked at mother and aunt with new eyes of admiration. Here was the modern counterpart of the celebrated women of old that I had heard of, Po Chi, wife of Duke Jung of Sung, who perished in her burning house rather than violate the rule of not leaving at night unless the matron and governess were there, or the very proper Meng Chi of Chi who preferred to die rather than ride home in a cart without curtains when her own cart broke down.

This was not a seclusion maintained by guards and locked doors, but a voluntary one based on Confucian ethics.

10

I was never spanked or even slapped, although my brothers were often severely punished. There were several reasons for this, one being that Orchid Blossom always protected me.

"She didn't mean to do it," she would say, or "It was not her fault."

Grandmother did not like to have children cuffed around and she also protected us. Third Aunt was inclined to accompany an admonition with a slap, or, if she thought grandmother could hear the sound of a slap, with a pinch that left the recipient black and blue. But mother and grandmother would reprimand us and add a hint of future punishment.

"We will see about this tonight."

This gave us something to look forward to.

"It is better to allow time for everybody to think it over before administering punishment," was grandmother's way of putting it.

This gave me an opportunity of which I availed myself to the full. When I was threatened with punishment, or knew I was in the wrong, I would be as good as pie. Not only would I be on my best behavior, but I would hover round to anticipate wants and perform little services. It always worked.

"I guess Ah Ling has learned her lesson," grandmother would remark, and that would be the end of it.

But the chief deterrent was the Confucian formality of our relationships, and our pride in family and clan and our own individual place in it. A reprimand always carried this connotation, and was felt to jeopardize our standing with our group and thus cause a loss of personal dignity and self-respect. This is the essence, in its simplest form, of what is often referred to as "face."

VI

Familiar Spirits

Sixth Sister and I explored together and got acquainted not only with the doings of all the people in our big household but with the ghosts and spirits that lived there as well.

One evening we went out to our rear courtyard. Tse Sao, our cook, had placed lighted incense on the well-curb as an offering to the spirit of the well, and was watering the peonies in their blue porcelain jars. We watched her for a moment and sniffed the pleasant fragrance of the incense, but there was nothing exciting about this so we moved on.

Sixth and I had become inseparable. She told me everything. I told her everything. We had a boundless curiosity that we tried jointly to satisfy. We had formed the habit of prowling at every opportunity and infiltrated our six courtyards, with the exception of the one containing the schoolroom and the sleeping quarters of the teacher and the older unmarried boys. This was taboo for us. There was plenty to be curious about in our household, and there was little that escaped us.

She was Lo Mei and I was Chih Mei. *Lo* is "six" in Chinese, *chih* is "seven," and *mei* means "younger sister." But I had to call her Lo Dzi—Sixth Elder Sister. This irked me considerably, for I was the youngest in my generation and had to be polite to thirteen older brothers and sisters, which seemed to me quite enough without having to include Sixth. But grand-

mother was strict about this, as she was about everything else.

We next looked into a room off the courtyard shared by four of our slave girls. They were there, and two of them were making straw figures. This seemed interesting, so we went in for a closer inspection. The slave girls rose and greeted us politely.

"Good evening, Miss Six."

"Good evening, Miss Seven."

And we made our reply to them in chorus with equal formality.

"Good evening, Welcome Wealth.

"Good evening, Summer Lotus.

"Good evening, Approaching Happiness."

We could not greet the fourth one, Jen Sung, for she was already in bed and sound asleep.

They invited us to be seated, and Welcome Wealth smoothed her bed for us, as the other beds were littered with straw. We sat down side by side—two little girls in identical red trousers and red jackets, black cloth slippers, shiny black pigtails, and shiny black eyes. Our feet did not reach to the floor so Welcome Wealth brought a basket to serve as a footstool.

She was fat with a round, red-cheeked face, and was very solid and reliable. She was grandmother's eldest slave girl, and was to be married to one of our tenant farmers that year and thus freed. She had the asthma very badly and used to cook and eat cat meat when she could get it. This was said to be a sure cure. She regularly offered me some, but I always said politely that I did not have asthma and did not need it. Moreover I could not see that it did her any good.

She now lit two candles, which illumined the gloom of the room with the locked boxes for the girls' clothing against the bare walls between the beds. Approaching Happiness brought

hot tea from the kitchen in covered yellow porcelain cups and served us with the formal hospitality Confucian etiquette prescribes for the entertainment of guests.

Sixth and I sipped our tea side by side and listened to their talk. Summer Lotus and Approaching Happiness were making straw figures about a foot high. When they had finished, they dressed them like women and propped the pair up in a basket. Then they lighted three sticks of incense and repeated a charm in which they called on some spirit to descend and enter into the figures. The basket was then taken up and balanced by Summer Lotus and Approaching Happiness, who each held a finger under the brim on opposite sides. Then Summer Lotus asked Welcome Wealth to take her place so that she could put questions to the spirit.

"You know that Lao Tai Tai has forbidden this sort of thing," said Welcome Wealth hesitantly. "She says that Confucius taught to reverence the spirits but to keep them at a distance."

I had many times heard grandmother say the same thing myself. And mother was always telling about various spirits, particularly the one that had repeatedly started fires inside their house at night when all the doors were closed and barred, and had burned down a considerable portion of their big residence when she was a girl, and her family had built a small temple to placate this spirit and worshiped there on the first and fifteenth of each month—and had had no more fires.

Summer Lotus made an airy, impudent gesture.

"*Pooh,*" she laughed. *Pooh* means "not" in Chinese. "Come on and play. This is only a small spirit who can't do any harm to anybody, and it is all in fun anyway. Lao Tai Tai will never hear about it."

Summer Lotus was a very smart and neat slave girl, and the leader in their many pranks. When she first came she was assigned by grandmother as the personal slave girl of my third

brother, and when he was older she was transferred to my fifth brother. She was much like Jem Po, the one who served tea to male guests in the big reception hall. Summer Lotus sometimes assisted her in this and eventually took her place when grandmother married off Jem Po to one of our tenant farmers several years later.

Welcome Wealth somewhat reluctantly helped to balance the basket again, and Summer Lotus proceeded to interrogate the spirit.

"Will Welcome Wealth's husband be handsome?"

The figures bowed once, which meant yes.

"Will she have many sons?"

Another affirmative bow.

"Will he beat her?"

"Yes," said the figures.

"Wonderful. A perfect husband," said Summer Lotus with unction, while Welcome Wealth looked complaisant.

This was new to Sixth Sister and me, although we had once seen them balance a stool so that one leg could tap out answers on the floor. With my fear of ghosts and other spirits, this made me feel uneasy but at the same time had an eerie fascination. Summer Lotus noticed us looking on open-mouthed, and turned to the figures with another question.

"How old are Miss Six and Miss Seven?"

The figures gravely bowed six times, our correct age.

"How do they know how old we are?" inquired Sixth Sister.

"It is the spirit," replied Welcome Wealth portentously. "There are spirits everywhere. They see everything."

Indeed it was the belief of all of us that every part of the house had its own spirit. There were also the spirits of the bench, the table, and the other articles of household equipment. These, however, were small spirits no one bothered to worship and were only summoned on occasions like this.

Grandmother approved of acts of reverence that dealt with

spirits by remote control, but insisted that there be no recourse to witches and no summoning of spirits even in play, for where they were concerned no one could tell how things would end. The slave girls, however, came from the most uneducated and superstitious portion of the population. Here flourished an unquestioning belief in spirits as everyday realities, too ancient and deep-seated to be easily controlled even in our modern day. So things of the sort went on in spite of grandmother's prohibition. Even our ladies occasionally went surreptitiously to consult witches in time of stress, but all such practices were most rampant among our slave girls.

2

The three girls now tired of putting questions to the straw figures and hid them carefully away. Then Summer Lotus went over and stood looking down at Jen Sung, who was snoring peacefully in bed. She was a drowsy girl and always slept very soundly. Her face, relaxed in sleep, looked utterly stupid, and this quality, combined with her good nature, made her the natural butt of the jokes of the other girls. She was the personal slave girl of my sixth brother and, although he was now quite big, being a year older than I, he still liked to be carried most of the day on her back, and this, in addition to her other tasks, tired her and made her go to bed early. She was just the opposite of Orchid Blossom, who was quick and intelligent and could always anticipate my wants, and never kept me waiting for anything. Sixth Brother used to scold her, and when really petulant, would strike her with his fists and kick her. As he was a very active and impatient small boy, and Jen Sung was always doing things wrong, she had a hard time of it.

"Let's start Jen Sung to work sweeping again," said Summer Lotus, with an impish grin.

Welcome Wealth said doubtfully that they had kept Jen Sung at work the last two nights and she would be all worn out, and if she got sick grandmother wouldn't like it, and if they were found out they would get into really serious trouble. She also intimated that Summer Lotus was simply trying to have Jen Sung do some of her work.

Summer Lotus tossed her head pertly and remarked that a little extra work wouldn't hurt Jen Sung at all for she was a lazy girl anyway, and that there was no chance of grandmother finding out about it so Welcome Wealth might as well join in the fun. Welcome Wealth at last gave in as she usually did, but with a final word of caution.

"It is nothing very serious to question the small spirit in a straw figure," she said doubtfully, "but the broom spirit is more powerful and harder to control. We had better be careful. Lao Tai Tai has my marriage all arranged and is going to give me a handsome dowry. I don't want to get into trouble with her and break it up."

"Pooh," said Summer Lotus again. "Don't worry."

Meanwhile Approaching Happiness had gone to a corner of the room and brought out a broom.

"That broom won't do," said Summer Lotus. "That is the one we used last night. It has to be a new broom or it won't work."

She thereupon went to a closet opening off the courtyard and came back with a new one. Then she got three sticks of incense, fastened them on the top of the broom-handle, lit them, and propped the broom near the head of the bed where Jen Sung lay sound asleep. All of us watched the thin smoke of the incense begin to curl upward in a slow spiral.

The three girls then joined hands and repeated an incantation:

"Broom spirit, broom spirit,
Get up and show your power.

First time send Yang Kung Po,
Second time send Mu Kwei Ing,
Fight a battle in the sky,
Kill three thousand soldiers."

This they repeated many times, over and over, more and more rapidly. At length the incense sticks began to move.

"See. The spirit has come," said Summer Lotus in a hoarse whisper. "The incense sticks are moving."

And so they were. I closed my eyes, and then looked again. They still moved.

I have thought this over in detail many times since, and I am still convinced that I saw the incense sticks move. It is of course possible that some current of air, perhaps set in motion by the movements of the girls themselves, may have caused a swirl of the incense smoke, and given the illusion of motion. But it was real enough to all of us at the time and it made me feel queer. I knew that Sixth felt the same way, for she edged closer and took my hand in her cold one and held it tightly.

Summer Lotus and Approaching Happiness now turned back the covers, took hold of Jen Sung, moving slowly and quietly so as not to wake her, slid her gently and carefully out of bed, where she was sleeping in her underjacket and trousers, and stood her up and put the broom into her hands.

Then Summer Lotus went and stood before her and gave orders in a low voice, which she made to sound as much like grandmother's as possible.

"We have guests coming tomorrow. Everything must be swept clean. Now get to work," she commanded.

Jen Sung began to sweep, but her eyes remained closed. Sixth Sister and I, still holding hands, got up and followed her step by step, taking care to keep at a safe distance, for we were not sure what turn this affair might take next. As she swept on and on we felt more and more uneasy and began to get fright-

ened. When she had finished the room the two girls helped her into the adjoining one, for she could not get over the high threshold alone. Here Summer Lotus gave her further orders.

"You are not sweeping clean enough," she said severely, "and you must work faster."

This made Jen Sung very angry and she gave the broom a flourish that knocked a candle off the table into a workbasket. This was filled with flimsy material which at once caught fire and began to blaze.

For a long moment we could not take in what had happened.

Summer Lotus screamed.

Approaching Happiness began to whimper, "Ai-ya, ai-ya, ai-ya," over and over and over.

Sixth Sister and I stood petrified, but just then Jen Sung turned toward us, wielding her broom in great swoops, and we hurriedly ducked out of her way into a corner and then gazed in bewilderment as the flames flared up higher and began to lick at the adjacent wall and furniture.

Meanwhile Welcome Wealth had run to her room and now came back with a quilt. She threw it over the fire and smothered it.

Then for a long moment we could not realize that the fire was out.

"Stop Jen Sung," gasped Summer Lotus, recovering herself now that the crisis was over, and starting toward her.

"No," said Welcome Wealth sharply, holding up a warning hand. "Are you looking for more trouble? We must send the spirit away and then wake her up gradually. Help me lead her into the courtyard so that we can clear up this room."

"Come this way, Jen Sung," she ordered, and the three of them carefully helped her over the threshold into the courtyard, with Sixth and me following.

"Now come and help clean up that burned stuff," whispered Welcome Wealth. "Quick, before anyone comes."

So we all started for the room, leaving Jen Sung in the courtyard, where she went on sweeping with unabated vigor.

"Ai-ya," exclaimed Summer Lotus, and pointed with her chin to a tall figure that was just entering the far end of the courtyard. We all turned our heads to look. It was First Uncle.

The three girls ran away. Sixth and I hid where we could see what went on in the dimly lighted courtyard and not miss anything. Although First Uncle was Sixth Sister's father and a good friend of mine, he was also the head of our branch of the clan, and ruled the male part of our household just as grandmother ruled our woman's world, so that we were both sufficiently in awe of him to have dire apprehensions of what would happen if he learned about this affair.

In accordance with our strict Confucian etiquette he looked neither to right nor left as he passed through the courtyard on his way to the outdoor lavatory used by the married men who shared their wives' rooms. We watched and held our breath. Perhaps he would not see Jen Sung. He moved quietly for such a big man, almost like a shadow, his cloth shoes making a barely audible whisper across the stone slabs that paved the courtyard.

Jen Sung still knew nothing and kept on sweeping here and there, right toward where uncle had to pass. Usually she stopped sweeping when someone came by, but tonight she was just like a sleepwalker and did not stop. Indeed she swept a lot of dust right onto First Uncle and made him sneeze. This got him very angry.

"Hey," he shouted at her, "stop making all that dust and let me pass."

But Jen Sung went right on sweeping and made him sneeze again. At this uncle slapped her cheek hard, which woke her.

She was much surprised and stood stupidly holding the broom and not knowing what she had done.

Uncle now realized what was going on. This made him still more angry, so he shouted for Welcome Wealth and Summer Lotus, and when they came, looking scared to death, gave them a good scolding, while they stood in fear that he might smell the burned cloth. But he was on the far side of the courtyard and had his nose full of dust, so he didn't notice it.

Sixth Sister and I had recovered from our fright, and curiosity had again gained the upper hand, so we came in cautiously and demurely to observe at close range. We were just in time to hear him say that this was a dangerous sort of play because a person like that might kill someone.

"How could that happen, father?" Sixth asked him.

He told us that when he was a boy they had played stick-spirit with a manservant and that suddenly someone had shouted, "Here is a robber. Beat him." Whereupon the man had set upon one of the boys, who had been severely injured before they could wake the man up.

After uncle was gone the two younger girls led Jen Sung back to her room and got her into bed while Sixth Sister and I helped Welcome Wealth gather up the burned materials and hide them away until they could be disposed of.

Then Welcome Wealth hurried back to their room, where the two girls stood half dazed beside Jen Sung's bed.

"Quick," she ordered. "Light some incense. We must call the spirit back. Hurry."

"What's the hurry?" asked Summer Lotus petulantly, as Approaching Happiness lighted the incense and brought the broom and stood it up again beside the bed. "The broom spirit always comes when we summon it."

"How do you know that it was really the broom spirit?" demanded Welcome Wealth in a whisper. "It started a fire,

didn't it? It made First Master wake Jen Sung before we could send it away, didn't it?"

"Ai-ya," gasped Summer Lotus, turning pale and glancing apprehensively over her shoulder. "Then it is still somewhere around here, and perhaps not the broom spirit at all."

"That's it exactly," said Welcome Wealth. "Now will you hurry."

This was a terrible thought. I glanced over my shoulder. There was nothing there. Or was there? I peered fearfully into the shadowy corners of the room and shivered as I thought of this deceitful devil that had palmed itself off as the broom spirit and was now lurking in the darkness, waiting to burn down our house as it had that of my mother's family. It might even be the same one.

The three slave girls had again joined hands and were repeating the same incantation to call the spirit back. But would it come? They grew more and more worried. Sixth and I looked on anxiously. After a long time and all at once, Jen Sung began to snore. It was a sweet sound.

"Now," ordered Welcome Wealth in a husky whisper, "bring fresh incense and spirit money," and Approaching Happiness brought them.

"We need more money than that," said Welcome Wealth urgently, and Approaching Happiness soon came back with a large amount of the paper replicas of "shoes," the ingots of gold and silver bullion that were current in the spirit world.

"Now," commanded Welcome Wealth, and they lit the incense and set fire to the pile of spirit money and, as it burned, repeated over and over an incantation of dismissal, exhorting the spirit to accept the money and go away and leave us in peace. Not until the thin layer of ash had turned gray on the stone floor did they stop.

"Well, that is all we can do," said Welcome Wealth, relaxing with a long sigh.

Summer Lotus remarked with something of a return to her usual flippancy that the spirit ought to be satisfied with all that money, seeing that the new year season was approaching and there were lots of poor spirits wandering around who would be glad to get that much money to pay their debts as all Chinese must do at this time.

"I only hope that Lao Tai Tai never hears of this," said Approaching Happiness. "Do you think that First Master will tell her?"

"Don't worry," said Summer Lotus. "That is not his responsibility and he never interferes with women's affairs. He won't say anything unless she asks him."

"Then we are all right," said Approaching Happiness and resumed her normal smile.

3

But I was not so sure. I remembered that the spirit had caused repeated fires in my mother's girlhood home. Perhaps this spirit too would return. I turned anxiously to Welcome Wealth.

"Do you think that this was an incendiary spirit?" I asked her.

She nodded somberly.

This confirmed my worst fears. What if this demon was lurking about, just waiting its opportunity to return and burn down our house, and perhaps us with it. Grandmother ought to be warned so that she could build a temple to the spirit as my mother's family had done, or take other necessary precautions. Perhaps I ought to tell. But the slave girls were my friends and this would involve telling on them and letting

them in for severe penalties. I sensed that they would not be my friends afterward. I became more and more worried about what to do, and more and more terrified as I began to feel that the safety of our household might depend on me.

I wanted to talk it over with Sixth, but decided that it was no use as she always followed my lead. I thought of mother but feared she would merely scold me. Father was away, and First Uncle and the rest of the older generation would think I was being disrespectful in trying to meddle in things that were the business of my elders. I thought of Welcome Wealth, but I could hardly ask her to tell on herself and the other slave girls. I finally decided to tell grandmother. She knew even more about what went on in our big family than Sixth Sister and I did, but that was because she had her seven servants and seventeen slave girls to serve as eyes and ears for her, and we had only our own four eyes and four ears between us. This brought a ray of hope. Probably she would find out for herself. This seemed reasonable but I was still uneasy, so much so that I dreamed all night about leaping flames that turned into leering demons, and woke again and again, more apprehensive and terrified each time.

Next morning when Orchid Blossom came to dress me she said that Jen Sung was sick, so I went earlier than usual to pay my respects to grandmother, and I was glad when she asked me to stay with her as she often did, for I wanted to see whether she would find out about the fire. Sixth Sister came in later to make her bow, but grandmother did not ask her to stay and we could only look at each other.

In due course First Uncle arrived to pay his morning respects. Grandmother had evidently heard something of these goings on, for she asked him about it. When he had finished his report there was a pause.

"Is that all?" she inquired at length.

He knew what she meant. According to the Confucian code no man should touch any woman except his own wife or daughter. Furthermore, it was grandmother's prerogative to discipline the feminine portion of the household.

I looked from one to the other. Here sat my grandmother with the shrewd lines in her grim old face, and her incredibly fat body filling her oversized chair with its huge bulk, and her two slender slave girls standing behind her. Before her stood First Uncle, a big man with a fleshy, resolute face and bluff manner, yet now ill at ease and shifting from one foot to the other as he waited respectfully, a filial son in the presence of his mother, and seeming oddly like a small boy awaiting punishment.

"There was no one else around," he said apologetically, "and I had to wake her up. It was dangerous to let her go on."

Grandmother started to ask something more but decided to let it go, and dismissed him. He bowed respectfully and went.

I became more and more worried for thus far there had been no mention of the fire demon.

She next summoned Welcome Wealth, whose anxiety and terror had so intensified her asthma that she could scarcely speak. Grandmother questioned her sharply and closely as to all details, and even had her repeat the spells the girls had used. But Welcome Wealth was cautious and managed to avoid any mention of the fire, so that my apprehension increased. At long last grandmother seemed to be satisfied, but that did not prevent her from sending for the other two girls and scolding all three severely, until Welcome Wealth wheezed audibly, Approaching Happiness wept, and even Summer Lotus wilted.

"You must be reverent to all spirits as Confucius said," she concluded as she always did, "and keep them at a distance. Spirits are not to be played with.

"Once when I was a girl," she went on after a pause, "one of our slave girls was sweeping in the same way that Jen Sung was last night when someone remarked that there was dirt on her broom. This made her angry and she started striking bystanders with the broom, and smashed dishes, overturned a lamp, and almost set the house afire before she could be wakened and quieted down."

The three girls exchanged frantic glances. I knew just what they were thinking. Had grandmother learned everything? Was this her way of leading up to some unprecedented punishment?

I felt relieved. Grandmother had doubtless found out about the fire, as I had thought she might. All would now be well.

But not so. Her thoughts were still in the past.

"There is another danger," she continued, reminiscently, "the girl must be wakened before midnight or she will die."

As she went on, the three girls began to recover from their scare, but the reaction from my moment of optimism plunged me into deeper depths of gloom and terror, and my heart began to beat painfully as I considered the crushing load of responsibility that was descending upon me. If only she would give one glance at their fear-blanched faces, I thought, just one glance and she would see that there was something going on she had not yet reached the bottom of.

But she went placidly ahead to her climax. "Sometimes it is almost impossible to waken a girl from this condition. I know of one case where the girl never did wake up, at least that was what I was told."

By this time I could stand it no longer. I did not know just what I was going to do, for I was only girl number seven and this was business for grownups, but I knew that I could not keep silent and let that evil spirit return and burn our place down without trying to do something about it.

"Grandmother," I said impulsively, when she had finished.

She looked at me in surprise, for at such sessions I was not supposed to speak unless spoken to.

"Yes, Ah Ling?" she said shortly.

"Grandmother, was that an incendiary spirit when the lamp was knocked over?"

The three slave girls stared at me with shocked and incredulous intensity. I knew that they were wondering whether I was going to tell.

"I suppose so," grandmother replied.

"Like the one that set fire to mother's house?" I persisted.

"Probably."

I took my courage in both hands.

"Did it," I inquired desperately, "did it come back again and start another fire?"

"No, it never came back," she said with finality and looked sharply at me. "Why?" she asked.

But I could only look at her and was unable to reply. We were safe. That was the only thing that I could think of. We were safe. And I would not need to tell. For a moment I felt as if I could cry—although I never have—and I wished that Sixth Sister were with me.

Grandmother turned to the three slave girls and regarded them severely. "Remember now, no more of this," she said grimly, dismissing them.

"Yes, Lao Tai Tai, yes indeed," Welcome Wealth stammered and wheezed for the three of them, as they bowed low and backed out.

Sixth was waiting outside grandmother's door, as I knew she would be, and hand in hand we followed the three girls to their room, where they sat down heavily and for a long time kept silence.

"Ai-ya," said Summer Lotus at length with a long sigh which the others echoed. "I guess Confucius was right."

Sixth yawned. I did too. She looked at me. I looked at her.

She knew what I was thinking. I knew what she was thinking. There was nothing exciting about this. It was time to move on. We slid off the bed.

"We will go now," we said in chorus, using a polite formula, "we have wasted your time."

The three followed us to the door.

"Go slowly," they said formally, and bowed us out.

Sixth and I departed in peace, hand in hand, to continue our research. But first I briefed her on what had happened in grandmother's room and answered all her questions.

We never experimented any further in this fashion, however. The slave girls must have had even more of a scare than I did, for they never played this game again.

VII

Our Clan

We took great pride in our clan, and had a keen interest in its history. This was particularly the case with grandmother, and her story of its beginnings was a favorite with all of the younger generation. I have heard her tell it many times.

All of us children regularly went to her room after supper to pay our respects and bid her good night. At times when she seemed in a favorable mood, we would ask for a story, but were usually told to run along to bed, and our slave girls were summoned to remove us if we persisted. However, at new year's or other festivals, she would relax in a more expansive and oracular mood, and the story would be forthcoming. Word would quickly get around and the whole lot of us would crowd in.

The candles on her dresser gave a dim light, and the shadows partially concealed her fat, ungainly body in her oversized chair and softened her austere face as she recalled the past and escaped for the moment from the pressure of her responsibility as the head of our household. As she forgot herself in her story, her voice lost its rasp, and its usual accompaniment of snorting almost vanished. Jem Po would fan her gently with a sandalwood fan which gradually diffused a pleasantly pungent odor throughout the room.

On one of the last times I heard this tale it was started off by little Toto, her spoiled great-granddaughter.

"Great-grandmother, tell us the story about the coming of our clan to this province," she demanded.

"Over four hundred years ago, during the Ming dynasty," grandmother began, "one of our early ancestors from the province of Kiangsi, far to the northwest, was appointed as an official in Chen Chang."

"Where is Chen Chang, grandmother?" asked Sixth Brother.

"It is in this province south of here," replied grandmother.

"And then what, grandmother?" asked Third Sister, who did not like interruptions.

"Later on, his sons married there. Then there was an invasion of the dwarves, as we called the Japanese in ancient times. His entire village was wiped out."

"What happened to his family?" I asked.

"Of course his whole family was killed also," answered grandmother.

"Ai-ya, terrible!" said my eldest sister, with a sigh that was echoed by the rest of us.

"But a little baby who was only thirteen days old was sleeping in a bamboo cradle."

"What happened to the baby, grandmother?" asked little Toto.

"His aunt hid him underneath her feet and covered him with her skirt. When the dwarves entered her room, she knelt down quickly and begged for mercy, pretending that she was a servant of the family and had to support her poor old blind mother. Those robbers answered nothing, and left."

We all were smiling and pleased with this wise aunt.

"How old was his aunt?" asked Fourth Sister.

"She was not yet married, so probably was about the same age as you," replied grandmother.

"After the dwarves left, she fed the baby with water. About midnight she hid him in her bosom, disguised herself as an old woman, and so escaped, and eventually reached a little village called Ma To."

"Is it the place where great-great-grandfather was born?" interrupted Sixth Brother.

"Yes," answered grandmother. "The baby was brought up by his aunt in that same village."

Grandmother stopped to clear her throat, and Jem Po refilled her cup with steaming hot tea.

"Who fed them?" asked Sixth Brother again.

"Nobody but this aunt, who earned a little money by her good needlework. When the baby grew up, he became a peddler and sold the *muh-tang* candy his aunt had made of wheat sprouts. Now this was a kind of candy that the people around here had never tasted before, so it became very popular. Later on, when he had made money, his aunt helped him to marry a girl from the Ma clan in this same village, and in time our Wong clan became larger than the original Ma clan. Then, long afterward, one of our clan moved to Kan San and became a rich merchant. This was your great-great-great-grandfather. He had eleven sons and forty-two grandchildren. He built the big residence on Wu Shon Street, with its pavilions and rockeries and its fifty rooms. That is where your grandfather was born and where I married him. Now Sze Pa Kung, Fourth Elder Grand Uncle, who succeeded your grandfather as head of our clan, lives there."

"Grandmother, you didn't tell us why we moved to this house," said Third Brother, who knew this story by heart.

"Yes, I didn't finish," she replied. "After your great-grandfather died the family divided. Your grandfather and I moved

here with your first uncle and aunt, a nurse, two slave girls, and your grandfather's personal servant, eight persons in all."

She paused to take a sip of tea.

"Now there are fifty-one of us in this household," she concluded with pardonable pride.

"Who built this house, grandmother?" asked Third Brother, making sure that nothing was omitted.

"Your great-grandfather built this house, and three more of the eight residences that our eight branches of the clan now occupy in this city."

Grandmother's other slave girl now brought in a tray of bean soup for night refreshment, steaming hot and sweetened, the kind we liked best, and mother and my two aunts came to bid grandmother good night and have a short visit as they did every day.

"It is late," said mother to us. "Now suppose we all go, and let grandmother have a good sleep."

So, one by one, we made our bows to her and said good night.

2

Our clan had thirty-one branches, and numbered some three thousand souls, all relatives, descended from a common ancestor, and all having the same surname of Wong. The eight branches in Kan San had over two hundred members, and included nearly all of the scholars and officials and a large part of the wealth of our entire clan.

In addition to the individual holdings of the members of the clan, there were clan lands at Ma To of two types, in accordance with ancient custom. One portion was allocated to various ones to be farmed on shares and the income used for scholarships or annual grants to degree men. Another large

tract was allocated for a year to each of the thirty-one branches in rotation, which produced a very substantial income for that year and provided a special fund which enabled the recipients to get ahead financially. Our turn was due in several years, and our branch had already made plans on how to use the money in increasing our business. In this, however, we were doomed to a sad disappointment.

Over two thousand of us lived in our part of the village of Ma To, divided into some twenty branches, and had overflowed to establish two other villages with about four hundred in each. Most of the villagers were farmers, except that usually about half of the men who belonged in Ma To were in Java, where they spent most of the years from twenty to forty and then came home to retire.

In Ma To was the main ancestral temple, of which the others were branches. Here were kept the genealogical records of the entire clan. Here was held the annual meeting of the representatives of the thirty-one branches, which conducted the clan affairs.

Our own branch was a family of merchants. We dealt in the sea food that was brought up the river to Kan San, where we had seventeen establishments, large and small: fish shops, fruit shops, bakeries, a restaurant, a dyeing establishment, a coffin shop, and a pawnshop that issued its own paper money in denominations of ten, twenty, and fifty cents. This currency enjoyed a wide circulation in our city and the surrounding district, and the pawnshop was really our own private bank. We also exported local products and had shops and agencies in Hong Kong, Malaya, and Java.

We were also landed gentry, with holdings of rice lands to the south and timber land in the mountains to the west. The rice lands were quite separate from the fields of the members of our clan around Ma To and were the individual property

of our own branch, having been purchased by grandfather. They were cultivated on shares by eight tenant farmers.

Some of us were scholars and officials of top rank, and ours was one of the twelve gentry clans that dominated our city, into all of which we had intermarried.

This was the standard pattern for a clan that had achieved position and power—a base in the village of its origin, with its leading branches in a near-by city, and this was an advantage to both. Nearly every day some of our clan from the country came to us for help in law suits or government business, and in troubled times it was especially useful. When there was a disturbance in the city we took refuge with them, and when they were attacked by bandits they took refuge with us.

Our clan with its branches in our city and the three villages, not to mention those in Malaya and Java, cut across the boundaries of government units. We might pay taxes or conform to police regulations in this place or that, but our fundamental loyalty was to family, and the ties of blood were stronger than those of citizenship. In fact the clan largely took the place of local government, and even functioned as a court of law. The clan is thus, to a considerable extent, the basic unit of Chinese government. But this introduces a serious complication. Modern government is on a territorial basis, and administers localities. Clan is on a kinship basis and often cuts across local boundaries.

3

The organization of Chinese society may be most conveniently understood by a consideration of names, and of the titles indicating kinship.

Long ago the head of our clan had called a meeting to propose a poem with felicitous meaning, one word of which

would be the name of each generation. In our dialect it goes like this:

Fu che i hao pei
Shu su ji sieng hsen
Jen hao chia fung yuang
Ju san pi tsei chuang

It may be freely translated as follows:

Hand down felicity to descendants who come after,
Carry on the literature of the ancients.
Benevolence and filial affection build our family fame,
Like a mountain for a hundred generations.

This verse looked ahead for four centuries. These twenty syllables fixed the generation names of the next twenty generations. Mine is the seventeenth.

To understand all this, it is necessary to bear in mind that the Chinese kinship pattern is vertical, from father to son, from ancestor to descendant, whereas the Western pattern is horizontal, the basic relationship being that between husband and wife, about which all other relationships center.

Our names put this kinship structure into words. Each person has three names: a clan name, a generation name, and an individual name, in that order. Thus each of my brothers bore the clan name of Wong and the generation name of San, plus his individual name. My first brother was Wong San-tang, my second was Wong San-lo, and so on. Personal names are thus seldom duplicated. In this we think that China is ahead of the West, and that such names are superior to constantly repeated ones like Tom, Dick, and Harry.

Within my generation we used numbers as our names for each other. The older generations had their individual names, but these were not used by their juniors, who spoke of them

by their relationship titles as First Uncle, Third Aunt, Fourth Elder Grand Uncle, and the like. There are some two hundred such terms for the various degrees of relationship, and these determine the structure of Chinese society.

All this may seem complicated and formal, but to us it was perfectly natural, and served to define clearly the position of each and indicate his relationship to the others in the clan. Something of this sort was found necessary centuries ago in order to enable large families like ours to live together in unity and concord. We were like the pieces on the chess board, each with a definite position and fixed moves.

An important part of the early training of children was in the correct use of names and titles. My first lesson in this came one day when I asked my mother what her little-girl name was. Mother scolded me.

"What put a crazy question like that into your little head?" she inquired severely. "It would not be correct in your place to address your elders by their childhood names. You must use their proper names and titles, and it is most disrespectful for you even to ask."

This taboo was further illustrated by the oft repeated story about the birth of my eighth brother.

Third Aunt had a very difficult childbirth and endured it without a whimper, displaying a fortitude we had not given her credit for. Our ancient midwife, after seeing the patient when she first came, did nothing, but merely sat collapsed in a chair like a shapeless bundle of old clothes and dozed, coming to life once in a while to ask what time it was. Third Uncle came at intervals to the adjoining room, where his mother-in-law, who had come to be with her daughter, was sitting, and became more and more worried.

"That old hag is getting too old to be any good," he exclaimed in exasperation. "Why doesn't she do something?"

"Please don't speak so loudly," whispered his mother-in-law placatingly, "she might hear you. Besides, she has delivered all the children of this household for a score of years and it has always been all right."

Sometime later the old midwife roused herself and went in again to see Third Aunt. She came out briskly.

"We shall have to use a special method and the time has now come," she pronounced with her uncanny authority, seeming more like an old witch than ever. She beckoned to a servant. "Ask the Elder Lady whether I can come to see her for a moment."

What she did was to go in and ask grandmother to tell her Third Uncle's little-boy name and then request his mother-in-law to stand in the adjoining room and loudly and repeatedly call him by this name, which she at once did. None of the rest knew this name or understood what it was all about, but Third Uncle came rushing up in comical perplexity and full of bewildered and voluble questions. Third Aunt heard all this from the next room and burst out laughing, and lo, the child was born.

"Too old, am I?" cackled the ancient crone, splitting her wrinkled face in a triumphant grin. "Too old, heh? It is only by long experience that I have learned what to do in these cases, and when to do it. This method always works," she went on. "I have used it many times and have never known it to fail."

4

But this system of names did not apply to girls, and most families had merely a series of little-girl names for daughters. This was forcefully brought home to me when I was seven, in a way that I never forgot.

One day at new year's, First Uncle took an iron box from its drawer in the cabinet in the reception hall where our ancestral tablets were kept and unlocked it with a key he carried. We children crowded around to see.

"These," he said, producing a book, "are our ancestral records."

"Is the ancestor who came from Kiangsi in it?" asked Sixth Brother.

"No," said First Uncle, "this is only the genealogy of our branch, the others are at Ma To."

He placed the book on a table and carefully prepared brush-pen and ink.

"I am now going to record the birth of my first grandson," he told us proudly. "He is the number one of his generation, and is the first son of the first son of the first son."

We all watched as he made the entry.

"Am I in the book?" I inquired when he had finished.

He nodded.

"Where? I want to see," I said, edging past the others.

He turned the pages. "Here you are," he said, and held the book where I could see.

I put my finger on a character. "I know that word," I said, "it is 'San.'"

"That is your second brother, Wong San-lo," said First Uncle.

"Show me my name," I said impatiently.

"Here," he said, pointing.

"I can read it," I said triumphantly. "*Chih nu*—seven, female."

"Right," he said approvingly.

"But I am Ling Ling and that is only a number," I told him. "Where is my name?"

"You are a girl," he said, unconsciously dashing my enthu-

siasm and merely stating a fact. "Boys have a name and a serial number. Girls have a number only. When you grow up and marry, the words will be added, 'married to so-and-so,' and your name will also be entered on the record book of your husband's clan."

I was hurt, and could not understand why I could not share the name of my generation. It was the small beginning of a sense of injustice that was to continue and grow more and more sharp.

5

Our branch had its complications. Its heads were grandmother's three sons, my first and third uncles and my father. Filial piety made them subservient to grandmother, but in business and outside affairs they perforce took the lead. Here tensions developed that arose from the conflicting characters of my first and third uncles.

We used to say we could always tell when First Uncle was returning for we could hear him way out on the street before he entered the front gate. His loud voice and booming laugh correlated with his big body. He had fat, ruddy cheeks, slightly protruding eyes, and a plump stomach. He always dressed in conservative Chinese-style clothes of gray. He was said to be very much like my grandfather. His yes was yes, his no was no, and he was very straightforward and positive about everything. He always knew what was the right thing to do and even grandmother never ventured to make suggestions or give advice as she frequently did to Third Uncle.

My father agreed with First Uncle, but he was the scholar of the family and so had less to do with business matters. He was thin, quiet, and always tired. He was away so much that he did not seem really to form a part of our lives.

Third Uncle had a round egg-face and resembled grandmother. He was very polite and was always backing and bowing or, to use the classical phrase, declining and yielding, which is the essence of Chinese courtesy. He was constantly getting off polite assurances regardless of their meaning. He wore a Chinese jacket and Western trousers and often used foreign slippers instead of Chinese shoes. Behind his back he was called foreigner, and some blamed his somewhat slippery ways on this, but they were really due to his overemphasis on being agreeable to everyone.

As the oldest son, First Uncle was head of our branch. He was devoted to its interests and always turned over all the profits from the business affairs in his charge to grandmother, as our entire household ate from one kitchen and lived on one budget. Third Uncle never turned over anything although his family also got their living from the household budget.

These conflicting practices did not result in any visible tension at this time. This was due on the one hand to First Uncle's jovial good nature, and on the other to Third Uncle's super-polite way of agreeing with everything, presenting plausible excuses, and then continuing to do as he pleased. Grandmother had control of the feminine part of the household, and although she often scolded Third Uncle, she had no real control over him.

This did not make much difference so long as our affairs were prosperous. But in the changes that were taking place about us, and that even began to penetrate our household, it made a rift in the unity of our branch that was bound to cause trouble.

6

We were indeed living in a time of change. But no change

in China is likely to be lasting unless it affects the clan, and no change in the clan is likely to be more than superficial unless it affects the inner apartments. To understand this it is necessary to consider in greater detail the special sphere of women. For Chinese society is organized on the basis of kinship structure.

The Confucianist is always looking back over his shoulder to the golden age portrayed in the classics. The Book of Changes, which goes back over two thousand years, has this passage:

"The woman has her correct place within, and the man has his correct place without. The correctness of position of man and woman is the great principle of Heaven and Earth. . . . When the father is father and the son, son; when the elder brother is elder brother, and the younger brother, younger brother; when husband is husband and wife, wife; then the way of the family is correct. When it is correct, all under Heaven will be established."

Here the family in the sense of the clan is envisaged as the basis of "all under Heaven," which means both world and state, and the correct place of woman is defined as of both national and cosmic significance.

The classic Book of Rites puts it thus: "The woman followed the man. In youth she followed her father and brother. Married, she obeyed her husband, and after the husband's death, she obeyed her son." A Chinese writer comments as follows: "After marriage the wife devotes herself to the comfort of her parents-in-law and is subject to the command of her husband and older sisters-in-law."

The Chinese clan is patrilineal. Only men really count. Women function in it only as they produce sons to maintain on the male side the biological continuity of the clan as the older male generations die off.

For women this involves a factor of instability. A girl cannot marry within her own clan, and has a status in the clan into which she marries only by virtue of her relation to some man in it, either as wife or mother. Indeed her status as wife is not really secure until she has borne a son. She then becomes incorporated into the clan by virtue of becoming one of the ancestors of its oncoming generations.

In our household the women who had come in as wives from other clans, and the girl children who had been born to them and would be married out into other clans, constituted our woman's world and had a psychology of their own. We were in the family but not of it.

It was the mother's duty to pass on to her daughters these traditions, and this was faithfully done, along with instruction in morals and conduct, ladylike duties and polite observances, all based on this classical point of view. This had the inevitable effect of conditioning us to life in the circumscribed world which was ours, and we accepted it as a matter of course. The result was an extreme conservatism, accentuated by the rigidity of Confucianism.

This extended even to foot-binding which most flagrantly symbolized these feminine disabilities, and the way this was geared into the teaching of etiquette is illustrative of the whole system.

We were taught not to laugh too loudly or talk too much, as that was considered unbecoming for girls of our class, and especially to walk with short steps. My mother was constantly repeating the popular couplet:

Siao puh dung swen
Dzoh puh dung jwen

which may be literally translated as follows:

Smile not move lips
Walk not move skirt.

This last was of course merely a rationalization of footbinding, which made long strides impossible anyhow.

7

When First Uncle returned from his first trip to Hong Kong, he had been much impressed by the freedom with which the women there went about and took part in all sorts of activities because their feet were unbound. He not only reported this but proposed that we do likewise. Grandmother listened with interest but told him to confine his advice to business matters and leave feminine affairs to her, so things went on as before.

But he took great interest in his four daughters, particularly the two oldest ones, my first and second sisters. He liked to see them fancifully dressed and he brought home silks of exotic design so that their gowns were in striking contrast to the shabby and out-of-style wardrobe of their mother.

So, when his eldest daughter's feet were first bound, and he came back from a trip and heard her sobbing with the pain of it, he was roused to action.

"What is the matter with her?" he inquired solicitously. "Is she sick?"

First Aunt told him.

"Do you mean she is being tortured like that just for a custom that has no sense to it anyway?" he demanded.

First Aunt tried to explain that the pain would let up soon, and that all girls went through this and got over it. But First Uncle kept interrupting with demands that his daughter's feet be unbound at once.

"I won't stand for it," he roared.

"But how will she ever get married," wailed First Aunt at last. "No one will be willing to marry a girl with big feet."

"You leave that to me," boomed First Uncle, jovial again, and sensing that he had made his point. "I intend to arrange a first-class marriage for her."

First Aunt said no more, but he still had grandmother to deal with. However he was too wily to make a direct approach, but roared and ranted about the place for a whole day until grandmother sent for him and let herself be persuaded to give in. Thus all of us grew up with unbound feet.

After later trips he began to advocate that the older women unbind their feet.

This was listened to with dismay, particularly by mother. Hers, being the smallest, conformed to the ideal of the popular song of the foot that would go into the hollow bamboo half-pint measure. I once carefully measured grandmother's shoes. They were exactly two and three-quarters inches from heel to tip. It was a marvel how a person of her great bulk could get about on them as actively as she did.

First Uncle got nowhere until he craftily induced grandmother to go with him to Hong Kong, where our shop was in charge of Third Uncle but was not going well, and her authority was needed to make some changes.

On her return we listened open-mouthed. She was struck with the cleanness of the city. There were no wells, but still you could get water anywhere. And it was hard to get fire to light a pipe. They had lights, but without fire. The thing that impressed her most was the way women went freely about the streets. In our city only servants and working women did so, or women of little reputation. But in Hong Kong she had observed many beautiful and refined women of evident good

breeding. She repeated over and over again that men and women were just the same.

After their return First Uncle concentrated on his own wife. But her conservatism and inertia were such that she could not get up her courage to take a step of this sort. First Uncle finally lost his patience.

"The world outside is changing," he shouted at her. "I have to change my methods of shipment. My goods now go down the coast in steamers instead of junks, and in Hong Kong are moved by truck instead of on the shoulders of men. Your woman's world inside this house must keep up. It is time you did something."

He paused and waited but, as usual, First Aunt made no reply.

This seemed to exasperate him. He seized a pair of scissors and himself cut the bandages that bound her feet while she looked on in a daze and submitted helplessly.

"What do I do now?" she inquired piteously as he threw down the scissors and departed.

Word of these matters spread rapidly and soon the room was crammed with all the women who could get in. Finally grandmother herself arrived, as First Aunt obviously could not go to her. She stood for a long moment, a hand on the shoulder of each of her two slave girls, and surveyed the wreckage. Then she had them lower her carefully to a bench. She turned to Jem Po.

"Ask my first son if he will be good enough to come here," she ordered quietly. Then she looked around.

"You may all go," she said, and the room emptied, except for First Aunt, who still sat in a daze, and grandmother's two slave girls, standing behind her. I was at her knee holding her hand, and as she did not order me to leave I stayed on.

First Uncle entered, bowed, and stood respectfully before

her. She looked long at his resolute face, perhaps thinking how much he resembled his father, and I realized in a flash that they understood each other and that she accepted the situation. At last she broke the silence.

"Tell me what she should do now," she demanded curtly.

He bowed, and began a recital of what he had learned in Hong Kong, the rubbing with hot rice wine to restore the circulation, daily massage by a slave girl, gradual loosening of bandages, a succession of shoes gradually increasing in size, eventually shoes only, no bandages.

Grandmother turned to First Aunt. She too had heard some of this when she was in Hong Kong.

"Do as he tells you," she ordered kindly.

So the process was begun, and observed with the greatest interest by all in our little woman's world. With our usual curiosity Sixth Sister and I crowded in close to have a good view of the proceedings and not miss anything. But one look at those horrible, flabby, deformed feet was enough. We fled. And I began to realize for the first time what it was that First Uncle had saved us from. It gave me a new respect for his practical good sense, and a new idea of the possibilities of the changing world beyond the bamboo curtain that shut us into the inner apartments.

The process worked. Grandmother was the next to try it, and soon our entire woman's world was experiencing a new feeling of freedom. It was slow. But feet gradually lengthened and expanded. But not to normal. Mother's feet remained considerably smaller than mine. Grandmother's expanded least, because she was the oldest.

This served as a first step, so to speak, and set our feet on the road to some of the other freedoms we later achieved.

PART TWO

Change

CUSTOMS *and superstitions out of the past hold us in their grip. New forces are brought to bear. We are caught in a confused struggle between the old and the new.*

I

Daughter of Ill Omen

As I GREW older I began to discover the reason for one of my keenest regrets, that I had seen little or nothing of my father during these years. It was because for several years he was confined to his study by grandfather's orders and, as he was isolated in the courtyard where the unmarried men lived, neither my mother nor I could go there to see him. To explain this I must go into the past history of our clan again.

Our clan held the highest official and scholastic status in our city. This went back several centuries to one of us who had taken first place in the national imperial examinations for the highest degree, known as Han Lin. He became a high official, which traditionally constitutes the chief claim to distinction in China in that it sets the seal of accomplishment and government recognition upon scholarship. It is also, with few exceptions, based on wealth, at least sufficient to provide leisure for the long years of study necessary. This, then, permanently established our prestige, but proved to be our highwater mark for both scholarship and official position.

As grandfather's wealth increased he had become ambitious to revive this tradition. His first move was to purchase the highest military degree for himself, but he soon found that a purchased degree qualified only for sinecures and honorary official positions. It did, however, make him eligible for the annual grant made from our clan funds to degree holders in

recognition of the luster their attainments shed upon the clan as a whole, and which, because of his high degree, provided over half of our entire living.

However, he was too realistic to be long satisfied with anything short of having an authentic scholar and official in the family. Furthermore, he was irked by the fact that the father-in-law of his only daughter was now the highest official in the city, being a Chu Jen or second-degree man, and having been the director of the provincial examinations. So he took action. First Uncle was an able businessman but no scholar. Third Uncle was brilliant but lazy. My father was the only hope. Grandfather therefore ordered him confined to his study until he completed the requisite preparation for the government examinations, allowing him only one holiday in the year. This is the standard method of making a scholar. After grandfather's death, grandmother rigidly continued the same policy.

I remember once when father wanted to come out to see my mother to show her a new poem he had written for her. He cautiously inquired of a slave girl, found that grandmother was asleep, and came quietly to mother's room. Mother exclaimed over his paleness and weakened condition. This was the closest I ever saw her come to showing her feeling for him.

"Ai-ya, you are sick," she whispered. "Why can't you be where I can take care of you?"

Then she kept Wood Orchid and me busy preparing tea and a nourishing soup. I was happy to help serve my father, but inadvertently knocked over a bowl, which fell to the floor with a crash, and we heard grandmother clear her throat. We all stayed motionless and stared at each other anxiously for a long moment. Nothing happened, and we gradually relaxed. But grandmother's suspicions were aroused and after a little she sent for father. We could hear her scolding him. Mother and I wept together.

The examinations came soon afterward and father failed to

qualify. He had begun too late to compete with men whose entire life had been given to study. Grandfather's attempt to mix business and scholarship had failed. We had definitely become a family of merchants. After this, father had more freedom, for it seemed useless to continue further. So he returned to his duties in the family business. This was not much better so far as mother and I were concerned, for he was away from home most of the time.

His feeling as to the importance of a classical education, however, was enhanced rather than diminished by these circumstances. When he returned from a business trip and had paid his respects to all and settled down comfortably in mother's room, his first question was always as to how we children were getting on with our studies. Nor was he content with a perfunctory or general answer but always had Third Brother bring his books, in which he would pick a passage at random, have brother repeat it from memory, and question him as to its meaning.

One night, father returned from a long trip after we were all asleep. The questioning had to go on just the same. Third Brother was routed out, but was so sleepy that he could not remember the passage, and father kicked him and beat him over the head with the book, until he wept bitterly, while mother and Wood Orchid looked on in pity and dismay but were powerless to interfere.

He wanted to get me up also, but mother dissuaded him. I was not in school, but was learning to repeat the rhymes all mothers teach their children about filial piety and family harmony, and father checked up on my lessons also. It was easy for me to remember these simple verses and I rattled them off with a glib assurance that always pleased him, and it was this that led him to direct that I should go to school when I was old enough.

Grandmother heard Third Brother crying that night, and

scolded father the next day for being too hard on us. After that when Third Brother heard that father was returning he used to study all night in preparation.

"*Lao-hu sin*—the heart of a tiger," he exclaimed bitterly to me at the end of one of these sessions. We were both afraid of my father when he was in this mood, but my brother had to stand at attention and take it, whereas I would retreat to the protection of my mother and stand near her. Furthermore, father was far more strict with him as a son than with me as a daughter. Mother used to try to get him to rest first, for he frequently returned utterly weary and half sick. But he would have none of it. Perhaps he felt himself a failure for not realizing grandfather's ambition and was implacably determined that we should succeed, at whatever cost to him or us, where he had missed out.

2

Father went on with his business as usual, but each time he returned from a trip he seemed weaker, and it took him longer to recover.

His doctor was the traditional type, for although there was a Christian hospital in Kan San, our family had no contacts with it and were suspicious of foreign medicine. The old-style Chinese doctors were greatly respected and had a recognized status as Confucian scholars. But the treatment did father no good.

Grandmother finally became so worried that she sent for a fortuneteller. These men also rank as Confucian scholars and are learned in all the ancient scientific and philosophical lore. This one was very highly esteemed in our city.

Sixth Sister and I followed Summer Lotus, who conducted the fortuneteller to the rear courtyard. He was a man of

middle age with a thin, intelligent face, and his characteristic expression was one of great shrewdness. His old cotton gown was turning from blue to gray. His long pigtail was wrapped around a black, greasy knitted cap. A black cotton bag hung from the handle of the old black cotton umbrella that he carried over his left shoulder. His left hand carried a bamboo cage with a large brown thrush hopping about inside.

Summer Lotus politely invited him to be seated at a tea table, on which he put his black bag and bird cage, and another slave girl served tea and offered pipe and tobacco for a smoke. Then Jem Po handed him the horoscopes of all the members of our immediate family, which gave the year, month, day, and hour of the birth of each. Sixth and I watched as he studied them intently, bending and straightening his fingers as he counted the ten celestial stems, the five elements, and the twelve branches and solar animals. When, at long last, he had finished, he told Summer Lotus that he was ready to report, and soon grandmother appeared, escorted as always by her two slave girls and followed by the two dogs. The fortuneteller rose, bowed to her respectfully, and then bowed also to my mother, who followed behind her.

"Please, sir, make your report," grandmother commanded, and ordered us children to leave. It was only years afterward that she told me what had taken place.

The fortuneteller had stated with impressive formality that the horoscopes showed an excess of female negativity in our immediate family, and that it was this that was undermining father's health and might have most serious results.

Grandmother asked him to explain. It seemed that father embodied the *yang* which is the positive male principle, while mother and I embodied the *yin,* which is the female principle and stands for negativity and degeneration. He said that this was much stronger than the *yang* influence of my father and

was breaking him down, and that it was necessary that this female influence be decreased.

My mother was almost frantic at the thought that she was injuring her husband and became half hysterical, calling upon heaven to let her suffer in his place and begging the fortune-teller to show her what to do.

He calmed her somewhat by saying that she was not the one chiefly concerned, but that it was I, girl number seven, her daughter. He said that my horoscope indicated that my negative force was very great because I had been born during the last two hours of the year, at the very time when the powers of darkness were at their maximum and had their greatest potency for evil.

Mother and grandmother gazed at each other in dismay. This was something that they had tried all these years to ignore, and now it had caught up with them.

But that was not all of it. The fortuneteller went on to explain that there was the further factor that this particular year had a special malign quality which combined with my negative influence in such a way as to violently augment its pernicious power.

When he finished there was a long pause. Finally grandmother asked what he recommended.

He replied peremptorily that I, number seven, must be sent away at once so as to remove my bad influence.

Grandmother asked him for how long.

He said that this special year would augment my influence until my father's next birthday, but that after that it would be much weaker. He emphasized that it would be most dangerous for father even to see me until after that time.

This caused consternation in our family, but no one thought for a moment of questioning it, for this has been the basic philosophy of China for twenty centuries. Father was expected back the next week, and immediate action had to be taken,

so mother and I with our personal slave girls went for a visit to my maternal grandmother. It was fortunate that I was not told any of this, for it would have broken my heart to know I was having such a baleful effect on the father whom I so much respected and admired.

This visit was a great lark for me. Their establishment was larger than ours, for my maternal grandfather lived there with his six brothers and their wives, concubines, descendants, slave girls, and servants. It was subdivided into two households. One was that of my grandfather and two brothers who were sons of the first wife. The other was that of four brothers who were sons of several concubines.

We stayed in my maternal grandmother's room and she and my mother had a wonderful time and visited all night long. This comforted my mother and made her feel more cheerful. At the end of a few days father returned and mother went back home with her slave girl Wood Orchid, leaving me to stay on in grandmother's room with Orchid Blossom to serve me. We had a great time exploring the big place. They had a much larger front courtyard than ours, and from one point it had an echo which we children never tired of trying out.

As soon as my father left for another trip I was brought back home, only to be sent back before his next return. This time, instead of Orchid Blossom, the girl Approaching Happiness was sent along to serve me. This made me very unhappy, for Orchid Blossom and I were devoted to each other and had never been separated, day or night, and I could not understand why she was not allowed to be with me. Also, Approaching Happiness, while a very pretty and clever girl, took little interest in caring for me, was not at all happy at first in a strange house, and did not get on well with the other slave girls. I got so that I cried most of the time, until my mother had to be sent for.

The reason for this—as I learned much later—was that the

affair between Approaching Happiness and the young man from our shop had continued to develop, but still had not gotten beyond the point of making eyes and a few casual words of conversation snatched from time to time. Therefore it had occurred to grandmother to send her away with me to keep them apart in the hope that the girl would develop some new interests. She certainly did. In a few days she had the attention of all the boys in my maternal grandmother's big establishment. Whenever we were in one of the courtyards, some of them were constantly showing up to make some remark or throw a ball of wadded paper at her, to which she would respond by making eyes at them with a most alluring smile on her pretty face. I have never seen another girl with a technique to equal hers.

I was brought home the day after my father left on his next trip, and was wonderfully happy to be back.

But when his return again necessitated my leaving, I wept and protested vehemently against being exiled, and grandmother had to be quite stern with me. But I had to go in spite of everything, and this stay was a longer one as my father was at home sick for some time. If Orchid Blossom had been with me it would have been all right, but she was needed for special tasks in the workroom to prepare goods for First Uncle's next trip to Java and could not be spared.

"I don't quite know what to do with Ah Ling," said grandmother as she and my mother were talking the matter over.

These complications were not lessened by the fact that my maternal grandmother complained of the way Approaching Happiness was carrying on flirtations with three of her grandsons at once. The result was that her career with us came to an abrupt end and she was at last sent home to her mother, and still another slave girl was sent to look after me.

3

It was just then that First Uncle returned from a trip to Java.

His arrival caused great excitement. We could hear his big jovial voice booming and echoing through the house as he paid his respects in order of seniority to grandmother and Third Uncle, and last of all came to the room of his wife. All of us children gathered in an inner court and waited expectantly. We could hear grandmother and the others exclaiming over the gifts he had brought them.

Finally he came, followed by two servants carrying heavy bags. He stopped and surveyed us with a broad grin, a big fat man with a fleshy face, dressed as always in a simple Chinese gown of the gray color he affected. He pretended to count us.

"All here, I see." He looked us over again and seemed to be amused about something.

"Here are presents for everybody," he said, and nodded to the servants. They dug down into the bags and began to hand out a kind of thing we had never seen before, deep brown in color and round in shape.

"What is it, Sixth Brother?" Sixth Sister and I asked together, running to him.

"It looks like a ball. Shall we play with it?" he asked, tossing it into the air.

"No, I don't dare. We might break it," I replied, and held mine tightly in both hands.

Here came Fifth Sister. "What is it, Chih Mei?" she asked.

"It looks like golden melon," said I.

"It looks like a ball," Sixth Brother insisted.

"I think it is neither ball nor melon. It is a kind of taro,"

said Fifth Sister. She tried it with her fingers, but it was hard. "It has flavor inside," she said, smelling it.

"It is juicy inside, too," said Sixth Sister, shaking hers and hearing it gurgle.

Just then cook came along.

"Cook will know," said Sixth Brother. "How about it?" he asked her. "Can we eat it?"

"It is eatable," said cook.

Sixth Brother tried to bite his. We all tried. But it was hard like stone. I looked at First Uncle. He was laughing heartily. I held mine out to him.

"How do we cook it, First Uncle?" I asked.

"Give me yours and I will cook it for you," he said.

I handed it over and he threw it hard against the stone flagging of the courtyard. Crack! It broke.

"Come quick and drink the juice," said First Uncle, breaking it apart with his big hands and offering it to me. I tasted it cautiously with the tip of my tongue.

"It is sweet and good," I said.

I turned to Sixth Sister and Fifth Brother. "Come and have a taste." They tried it gingerly but would not take a second taste, so I drank the rest myself. I could smell the fragrance as I drank.

"Is the white part eatable too?" I asked First Uncle.

"Yes. You try it. You will like it, Ah Ling."

I bit off a little with my front teeth and chewed it.

"Ai-ya, delicious!"

First Uncle pinched my ear the way he did when he was pleased with me.

I offered Sixth Sister some. She shook her head. "I am afraid of it," she said.

"Let me have some, Chih Mei," said Fifth Brother, and bit off a big mouthful. He spat it out immediately.

"It is raw," he exclaimed, making a face.

Seventh Brother came and asked for some. He liked it and together we finished it.

My lovely sweet coconut was gone. Although my stomach was very satisfactory, my heart grew heavy. Everyone else still had one, but only the brown shell of mine was left on the floor.

"Ah Ling, do you want some more?" asked uncle, laughing and vastly pleased with me.

I nodded.

"All right," he chuckled. "You come with me on my next trip and you can have all the coconuts you want."

"Really, First Uncle?" I asked incredulously. "Really? Oh, I should like to go with you. Can Sixth Sister go along?"

"Yes, if she likes coconuts," laughed First Uncle.

Mother was horrified at the mere suggestion, and grandmother most doubtful, but First Uncle laughingly pooh-poohed their objections.

"Our little Seven has the real spirit of adventure," he told them in his big voice. "We will get her insatiable curiosity satisfied for once."

It was long afterward that my mother told me what really decided the matter.

"I am still greatly worried over the ill health of my second son," grandmother told her one day a little later. "And I am worried about Ah Ling. She cries more and more every time we send her away." She paused as if making some decision and then went on. "We have sent her to your family home, but perhaps she is still too close by and her evil influence prevents my son's recovery. It might be better to let her go to Java. Her female negativity could not harm him from so great a distance. Then she is begging to be allowed to go and have more coconuts, and it will keep her happy. It will also keep

her away until after her father's birthday, when it will be safe for him to have her return."

However, grandmother would not decide until she had obtained a favorable reply by divination in the temple of the Queen of Heaven, who was worshiped by the seafaring population along our South China coast. I went with her. Our sedan chairs were borne across a large courtyard to the door of the temple. Inside it was dim and filled with the pungent reek of the camphorwood chips that were burned as incense. On the right was a tall figure in red who gazed ahead with a hand above his staring eyes. On the left was a figure in blue who held his hand to his ear. The walls were painted with clouds and dragons. In the center of the back wall sat the goddess. She wore a red garment embroidered with golden dragons. A jeweled crown with pendants was on her head. She held a jade tablet in her hands.

Grandmother lit several sticks of incense and stood them upright in the ashes in the incense burner on the altar. Then after the attendant priest had muttered an incantation she took from his hand the hollow bamboo containing a hundred numbered bamboo slips. Holding this in both hands she bowed, shaking the bamboo until one of the slips fell out. The priest took from the rack a slip of printed paper with the corresponding number. The answer was favorable. I could go.

Grandmother now proceeded to pick up some ashes from the incense burner by using the end of a divining stick, and wrapped it in a piece of red paper and brought it home. My mother made a red cloth bag for it and I wore it on a string about my neck as a charm against evil when I sailed.

And so it came about that I, aged six, went with First Uncle and his party on his next trip to Java.

4

The geography of our South China coastline invited seafaring. To the east of our city, the mountains rose out of the waves and stood sentinel over quiet inlets and fast-flowing rivers that broadened into spacious estuaries. Distant islands scarcely seen over the horizon tempted the adventurous mariner, island after island, all the way to the pearls and spices of the South Seas.

For two millenniums, Chinese junks had followed the monsoons southward. Eight and a half million Chinese had emigrated, largely from two provinces of the southeast coast of China, of which ours was one. This is a continuation of a migratory movement that has gone on for thirty centuries; our own clan of Wong came, over four hundred years ago, from a region five hundred miles to the northwest. Our city was tributary to one of the great seaports in which this commerce centered, and had its own modest traffic through a smaller port and fishing center some fifteen miles away. Thus the traditional isolation and self-sufficiency of the Chinese village and small city were modified in our region by wider contacts.

First Uncle's cargo consisted of dried and salted jellyfish and other sea foods, red mushrooms, brown lychee nuts, and the pale, lemon-colored dragon-eyes. There was a relish too, made of fermented sea food, for which our province was famous. This was shipped in large crocks sealed with clay. There was always tea—jasmine tea, and the heavy-bodied tea with the strange name of Iron Goddess of Mercy. Our family were middlemen, buying up and exporting the products of our region.

First Uncle took with him a clerk from one of our shops, whose duty was to hire coolies to transfer our cargo from shore to boat and from boat to shore, and to keep a tally. The clerk took his family along and others joined our party, so that there

were twelve in all, including three of us children. Another member of our party was a stalwart, very dapper individual with sharp, restless eyes, who never had anything to say or anything to do, but gave the impression of waiting for something to happen. He was always close to uncle, but they never spoke. I learned to know him later as Tung Tung Ko, the armed guard of our pawnshop, who went as far as Hong Kong as uncle's bodyguard.

We started early. We went by sedan chair, for in our district there were no wheeled vehicles except an occasional wheelbarrow, and no roads wide enough for a cart. There are still no railroads in our entire province of twenty million people. After several hours we arrived at the sea, where we boarded a junk that took us down the coast to Amoy. Here we stayed in a place where there were a woman and two children. We could play together but could not talk to each other for we spoke different dialects. The boy took me to visit his garden and told me the names of the flowers, and I told him their names in my native tongue. We knew the things before us but could not speak of things we could not see at the moment. I did not know it then, but the woman was a concubine of my uncle and the boy was my cousin.

At Hong Kong we transferred to a great white ocean liner. The sea was smooth and we three children had a wonderful time exploring every corner of the ship. Except that every time we tried to go upstairs we were grabbed and turned back by a very tall dark man with bare feet below and a big red turban above, and in between a tremendous black beard done into a roll in front, just as grandmother's hair was done in a roll behind.

At Penang there was a pleasant Malay woman who looked after us. And more children. When I asked First Uncle who she was, he looked sharply at me and said she was the cook.

Again, I was to learn in later years that she was another concubine, and the children were more cousins, and indeed that he had a family in each of the four main ports where we had business. First Uncle's wife was more than once told of this, but as usual said nothing. She did not lose face, because men abroad generally established such families. First Uncle did not bring any of the others back home, even from Amoy. I think this was really because, for all his bluff ways, he was at bottom afraid of grandmother.

Much later I came to understand another factor. First Uncle was the head of our branch of the clan by virtue of seniority. That is the Confucian system. But Confucianism is also a system of rather Puritanical ethics, and a person in First Uncle's position who did not live up to it was likely to lose the respect of those under him and weaken his authority.

It seemed that he had not planned to bring his Malay concubine to Kan San, but she had begged to be taken along, although she knew he had a wife in China, and he, with his usual good nature, had compromised by taking her to Hong Kong and giving her a room in our shop there, which was in charge of Third Uncle. The latter did not like this at all, for, although she was only a concubine, she outranked him in seniority by virtue of her relation to First Uncle. So First Uncle finally had to bring her to Kan San, since she did not speak Chinese and there was no other place for her.

However, he soon found the sentiment in our household solidly against him. It was one thing to have concubines in Amoy or Java, where they could be ignored. It was something quite different to bring one openly into the big family of which he was the head. First Uncle was proud of his position and authority, so it soon became known to all of us that he never entered her room, day or night. That saved the situation for

First Uncle, but was tragic for the Malay woman who had given up her own people to follow him to an alien land.

5

On our trip there was an endless succession of new and strange things to eat, pawpaws, coconuts, and exotic foods of all sorts. First Uncle had me try every one. I liked them all, at which he was delighted.

At the last place where we stopped in Java, the household was presided over by a handsome Chinese woman from Amoy. Uncle did not tell us how to address her, so we called her Amoy Lady. The servants were two sprightly Javanese girls, lightly clad in colorful sarongs. They always knelt at the door and crossed the room on their knees when they served him, which seemed to amuse him very much. But it made me uncomfortable, somehow, as if in doing this they were not quite like human beings. Uncle seemed to be on good terms with both.

One day we children were playing when we heard heavy footsteps and then a knock at the door. I opened it, and there stood a strapping big Negro, coal black, with thick red lips, and stooped over with the heavy burden he was carrying on his back.

I was petrified. I had never seen a black man like this and could not move, only stare. He looked down at me and rolled his eyes and smiled. That finished it. His teeth were appallingly large, and terribly white against the black of his face. He looked just as devils were always described in our most bloodcurdling tales of the supernatural. I had never quite believed this, but here it was before me in living actuality. I screamed and ran.

I took refuge with the Amoy Lady. She tried to explain and soothe me, but in vain; I had hysterics and only calmed down

when First Uncle, who had been hastily sent for, at length returned and took me in hand, and it was two weeks before I fully recovered. I ran a fever and would dream that this black man was after me and wake up screaming.

The return trip was stormy. Winter had come and we were cooped up inside. The women and children, on whom uncle had counted as company for me, decided to return later, but First Uncle was determined to be back for the new year. I was on a top bunk in a smelly cabin packed with strange women and children, and was terribly seasick. I didn't know where uncle was, and had no one to look after me except that once in a long while someone would bring me food and drink. Then the others began to scratch. Soon I began to scratch too. It was a wretched trip and I wondered if I would ever get home.

As I staggered from the sedan chair in our courtyard and started for grandmother's room to report, mother pounced upon me, but recoiled before my noisome and unwashed appearance. I tried to bow to her, but could not refrain from scratching as I did so. That was the only time I ever saw my mother angry. But convention forbade her to blame First Uncle, so she said nothing, except to give swift orders to Orchid Blossom, who bundled me into a tub of hot water, clothes and all. It felt good.

My mother explained to grandmother, and it was agreed that I would pay my respects to her the next day. So the following morning I went to her room, still dizzy, a little wobbly and hoarse, but able to tell her about my trip. She was concerned over my condition, but was inclined to look more leniently on the hardships of my return voyage, particularly as I was now cleaned up a bit. Also, she was in an unusually benevolent mood, for the trip had been highly profitable and First Uncle had handed over to her a very substantial sum of money, as indeed he most generally did.

6

After I had finished my tale and was answering her questions, we heard in the distance the cry of a street hawker passing along the lane in front of our gate.

"Hush," said grandmother, holding up a hand and listening intently.

"Tiger meat," she said. "Tiger meat. That will be exactly the thing." And turning to one of the slave girls she ordered her to go to the gate and buy two catties of meat and tell the cook to make a stew of it.

When cook reported that the tiger stew was ready, grandmother went in person to our dining room to superintend the operation. She looked at us benevolently.

"This will be very good for you," she said.

All of us children sat expectantly around our two tables. Then cook and her assistant brought in two big steaming bowls of the tiger stew and set one in the middle of each table. There was an immediate scattering. The stuff smelled to heaven.

"None of that," said grandmother sternly. "Come back to your places at once."

We obeyed reluctantly, looking apprehensively at the stew cook was ladling into our bowls. It smelled much worse than Welcome Wealth's cat meat.

"Now eat it," she commanded.

Obediently we started. But there were immediate wails of protest.

"It is spoiled."

"I can't get it down."

"It tastes terrible."

"It makes no difference whether you like it or not," said grandmother. "This is not food. It is medicine. You are eating

the strength of the tiger. It is good to prevent measles and all other diseases. Now down with it, and quickly."

There was nothing for it, and I ate mine as rapidly as I could swallow. It was coarse and had a terrible smell and tasted rotten, but I managed to keep it down. Sixth Brother was not so lucky, but our indomitable grandmother had the answer to that one and saw to it that he got another bowl of the stuff. She eyed us with complacency.

"Good children," she said. "This will give you strength and protection to resist all the demons of disease."

After this introduction and some more sleep, it was fine to sit down to the noon meal with my sisters and have our home food again.

"M-m-m," said I, plying my busy chopsticks and holding out my rice bowl to my slave girl to be refilled. "First Uncle had a brown cook in every place where we stayed. They made some wonderful things but none of it was as good as this."

I saw grandmother look sharply and queerly at me. She said nothing, but her grim old lips seemed to shape the word "cook."

My father returned the next week, and I was permitted to see him, as his birthday was past, and during the year on which he had now entered, my female negativity would have a far less pernicious influence. It was wonderful to be together again. He questioned me about my trip to Java and listened with amusement to the tales of my adventures. Then he had me recite the books mother had taught me, and was greatly pleased when I stood before him and rattled them off with scarce a pause for breath.

"Our little bell is going to be a real scholar some day," he told mother. "She must begin school right after the new year."

This gave me two exciting things to look forward to, the new year festival, then school.

II

The New Year's Festival and Signs of Storm

THE NEW YEAR is the most important festival of all. Our preparations for it began on the first of the twelfth month. Ni Niang, the seamstress, was making new dresses and shoes for all the family, and for all the servants and slave girls as well. Cook, with four helpers, was busy for the whole month preparing food. Five pigs and three sheep were brought home and cooked. Sui Te, the water coolie, helped the slave girls clean house and move out all broken furniture and utensils to be repaired. The teacher was writing auspicious sentences on red paper, and the slave girls were pasting them on doors and pillars. The reception hall was renovated. The two big pillars in the center were repainted scarlet. The golden characters on the upper part of each were regilded. They read: "With guests converse of scenery of mountains and rivers. To sons teach great literature and the composition of essays."

Now the exchange of new year's gifts began. Ten catties of pork and ten of long noodles with red paper labels expressing congratulations were sent to the families of our senior relatives. A special load was sent to the teacher of our family school. This included a large cut of pork, a live cock, a big whole fish, two kinds of shellfish, some dried sea food, a big bundle of

long noodles, sweet cakes, fruit, and a vessel of wine. These all together made up a perfect number of ten.

All of the new year's observances reached their high point in the worship of our ancestors that took place in the great reception hall.

A long table, with both ends curving upward, stood before the cabinet in which the ancestors' tablets were kept. A porcelain vase, filled with sprays of yellow blossoms of the *lah-mei* tree, was on the left end, a mirror on the right, and a white porcelain incense burner between. On a square table in front of this was an offering of five kinds of fruit.

In the late afternoon of the last day of the year all the men and boys of our branch of the clan gathered before the ancestral shrine. The ladies of the family were not present. My sisters and I were permitted to stand at the far end of the hall in charge of our slave girls and under the supervision of our steward, Kiu Kung.

First Uncle as the head of our branch of the clan washed his hands ceremonially and opened the door of the cabinet containing the ancestral tablets. What we saw inside was like the first three steps of a wide staircase. On the top step was a large wooden tablet eighteen inches high and a foot wide. Kiu Kung told me that this was the tablet of all our former ancestors. On the next step stood a smaller tablet, about four inches wide, which was for grandfather. Similar tablets on the third step were those of my fourth uncle, who had died before I was two, and in the lower right-hand corner those of a brother, a sister, and a cousin who had died when they were young.

First Uncle lit three sticks of incense, held them reverently to his forehead, and stuck them upright in the ashes in the incense burner. Then he lit two candles and put them on the candle stands. My father lighted the two big six-sided glass lanterns that hung down from the center crossbeam. A man

servant brought in three trays of food offerings, and First Uncle solemnly placed them on the square table in order, ten wine cups, ten rice bowls, with chopsticks and a china spoon beside each, and dishes of vegetables and meats. A basin of hot water and a towel were set on a stand beside the table. All was now prepared for the descent of the ancestral spirits.

Third Uncle stepped forward and burned paper money and lit a long string of firecrackers, which fizzed and banged and smoked for quite a while.

Then First Uncle advanced to a position facing the shrine and knelt down and kowtowed before his ancestors, knocking his forehead three times on the stone floor. Then he stood at one side and, one by one, summoned the rest, uncles, brothers and nephews, in order of seniority. I watched as each knelt and kowtowed in his turn. Every move was dignified and formal.

This gave me a deep impression of the presence of the unseen spirits. These were good spirits, and my feeling was quite different from my chronic fear of ghosts. It was my first real intimation of the spiritual.

It was partly the ritual, the setting out of the food and wine as if the ancestors were there to partake, partly the portentous solemnity of my ordinarily boisterous and jovial first uncle and the others who participated, and partly the spirit of the special occasion. It was even more the consciousness, shared by all of us, of being in the presence of a mystery greater than ourselves. I looked at the ancestral tablets and, in my imagination, saw an old, gray-bearded man sitting in his seat inside the cabinet. Perhaps he was my honorable grandfather come back home to pay a visit to his family.

I watched until the smallest boy had completed his bows with the help of his father, and then turned to Kiu Kung.

"Shall I also bow to our ancestors, Kiu Kung?" I asked.

He shook his head. "Keep quiet," he said in a low voice of finality. "Say nothing."

I suddenly felt orphaned. This was my family and my home, and yet I did not really belong. I felt unaccountably and unjustifiably shut out. I wanted to ask him why my brothers could worship our ancestors and I could not. But I didn't dare.

Servants began setting the tables for the feast the males of the clan would now enjoy in the reception hall, sharing it with the spirits of our ancestors. Kiu Kung went to his own courtyard to eat in solitude. He did not belong. Our slave girls led my sisters and me out to the women's dining room. We did not belong either. The mysterious realm of the spirit of which I had gotten a momentary intimation was suddenly clouded over.

2

There followed the climax of the new year's celebration, our own feast. This was the happiest meal of the year to us children, for we did not have to eat at our usual table but we girls were allowed to join our mothers and the boys went to eat with the men at their fathers' tables in the men's dining room. Grandmother came and sat down in her big chair. I sat between her and mother. A pair of red candles was lighted on each table, and firecrackers were set off.

We children had porcelain bowls and spoons on this occasion, which we enjoyed very much, since on ordinary days we used wooden ones.

"Every child must be careful of her bowl and spoon and nobody must break anything tonight," warned grandmother.

Everybody enjoyed this meal. We talked, ate, laughed, and ate some more. Even grandmother relaxed. Suddenly I dropped

a chopstick. Mother looked at me with very serious eyes, because this would bring bad luck.

Little Toto sat on the other side of grandmother, and Black Dragon, grandmother's little dog, who sat in the big chair beside her, reached over and began to lick from Toto's cheek the succulent pork gravy with which it was generously bedaubed. She pushed him away.

"Stop it, Black Dragon," she cried. "Stop it."

Her mother clapped her hand over her mouth to prevent further speech. All stopped talking and eating and looked at her with dismay.

This was because she had used the word *ssu,* meaning "stop," which sounds exactly the same as the word *ssu* which means "death." This was very bad luck, for this word was taboo and was particularly inauspicious at the beginning of a new year.

"Go on eating," ordered grandmother, after a long pause. "I will take care of it."

We obeyed, but it put a damper on our festivity and completely spoiled the occasion for First Aunt, who was very superstitious about such matters. At the end of the meal, grandmother carefully wiped every child's mouth with a piece of paper to take away this ill-omened word which would otherwise result in misfortune. She was very serious about this, as she feared the ill effects on my father's health. Then she gave each child a red paper roll of coins for good luck.

Everyone awoke early on new year's morning. There was a general feeling of happiness. Each had another birthday on this day in addition to his regular one, and added a year to his age. Family, servants, and slave girls appeared in new dresses, new stockings, new shoes. Men, boys, and small children had new hats. Women and girls wore no hats, but their hair was well and freshly combed. My pigtails were done into a knot.

No more little-girl headgear for me hereafter, because I was now seven years old, quite grown up.

A long string of firecrackers was set off in the courtyard. Uncles, brothers, and nephews again gathered and worshiped the ancestors with the same ritual as before.

Then juniors greeted their elders with deep bows and formulas of *"kung-ho"* and *"bai-nien,"* congratulations and new year's respects. We children got gifts, a couple of tangerines and a red paper package of money apiece.

Everybody ate noodles for breakfast instead of the bean milk we ordinarily had, for extra long noodles promoted long life.

After breakfast the men of the family departed to make calls on the men of the other branches of our clan and on relatives and friends, where they gossiped and drank together in the reception halls. Some of the women went in sedan chairs to congratulate the elder women of their own families, where they were received in the inner apartments by hostesses in ceremonial garments who entertained them with the most elaborate new year dishes. The rest stayed at home to receive guests.

Grandmother sat in her big chair and received congratulations. Her little gray monkey climbed to her shoulder, and was at once attracted by a large white flower in her hair knot. He stood up and plucked a petal. This he sniffed at, long and with evident appreciation, putting it to his nose again and again. Then he threw it away. But soon he solemnly plucked a second one, and then repeated the process with almost human relish. This went on until he had thrown away the last petal. I watched grandmother to see what she would do. I got a distinct impression that she was amused, but she gave no outward sign of it.

Kiu Kung took those who were students to pay their respects to the teacher. Other children were sent, in the care of slave

girls, to pay their respects to their maternal grandmothers. We had a song we children used to sing:

Rao, rao, rao, dao wai-po chao.
Wai-po jao o siao bao-bao.
O jo-gung, wen wai-po hao,
Wai-po jih o dien nien-gao.

This stressed one aspect of the new year season that appealed especially to us, the custom of giving new years cakes—*nien-gao*—as presents. Oddly, the translation is not so different from the original, if both are read aloud (*wai-po* is "maternal grandmother," *o* is "I" or "me," "mouse" is not used this way in Chinese):

Raus, raus, raus to grandma's house.
Grandma calls me Precious Mouse.
I ask how she is, make bows,
Grandma gives me sweet *nien-gaos.*

The boys gathered in the courtyard. Some were flying kites with small lanterns fastened to them. Others were kicking shuttlecocks back and forth with their feet. Some went riding on the horses that were for rent along the street. The girls played cards or dominoes with brothers or sisters.

This was a happy time. Everybody engaged in conversation, *"wa-la, wa-la, wa-la,"* the women all talking at once. Children ran in and out playing games and shouting at each other. Servants and slave girls went back and forth pouring tea and serving watermelon seeds. Dogs barked and babies cried. It was a peaceful family atmosphere.

3

The feminine contingent among our guests began to arrive. A handsome sedan chair was set down just outside the door to

the inner apartments and a beautifully dressed young woman emerged and vanished through it. We girls followed her in. She belonged to the family of my grandmother's sister and was most cordially received by the ladies of our household.

Our slave girls kept coming in on one pretext or another to stare at her. Mine came also, ostensibly to take me away. When we got outside I asked her what the excitement was about.

"Do you know who that is?" she asked.

"Certainly," said I. "That is grandmother's third elder sister's new second granddaughter-in-law, Mrs. Liu."

"You don't know the half of it," said Orchid Blossom with unction. "She used to be a slave girl in that family. What do you think of that?"

"Slave girl," said I. "She certainly doesn't look like a slave girl now."

"She looks like a great lady," said Orchid Blossom with conviction. "Who would ever suspect, to see her now, that she was handed over by her father in payment of a gambling debt."

Jem Po now came along and added her bit.

"Did you ever see anything like it?" she asked ecstatically. "That family of your grandmother's third elder sister's daughter is a good one. The mistress comes to be very fond of this slave girl, and what does she do? Just like in a fairy story. She marries her to her son, only she has no son of her own so she adopts one and marries the slave girl to him just the same."

"Yes," said Orchid Blossom, with a dreamy look, "and she is only seventeen. They say her old mistress treats her more like her own daughter than like a daughter-in-law."

More guests continued to arrive. Suddenly Third Brother became greatly excited.

"Here comes that bad man who dodged our collectors last

night," he called out. "See, he has just come in the gate and is strolling up the walk as if he owned the place."

According to Chinese custom there are three times a year for debtors to pay up: the fifth of the fifth month, the fifteenth of the eighth month, and the end of the year. If some did not pay their debts, the creditor would send persons to their homes to collect. Therefore Tung Tung Ko, the guard from the pawnshop, had been out with two clerks. They had come home late the night before and reported to First Uncle that this man, who owed a large amount, had locked his door and gone away. They had been to his house three times. And here he was, coming up the walk.

"He has a tremendous gall to come here today after failing to pay up," Third Brother went on angrily. "I suppose he thinks that he can take advantage of its being new year's day when everyone will be too polite to say anything."

Third Brother was very honest and literal-minded, and full of righteous indignation. All the children in the courtyard crowded round, and some of the older boys plucked his sleeves.

"What are you going to do?" they asked.

"I am going to ask him to pay up," Third Brother replied loudly.

The man stopped and looked at him and the rest of us children. "I have come to pay my respects," he said, using the customary courteous formula.

Before Third Brother could reply, we heard the voice of First Uncle from the steps of the reception hall.

"You children. Do not be impolite. Today is not a day to talk about business. Courtesy is more important than money," and First Uncle came down the steps toward his guest.

"Bai-nien" and *"kung-ho,"* they greeted each other, and bowed with hands together in front of their chests. Then uncle entertained him just the same as the other guests, with tea and the special new year dishes from the kitchen. When

he rose to leave, uncle ceremoniously escorted him part way to the gate. As he turned for a final bow the man spoke:

"I am very sorry that I could not pay my debt to you, but I will try to do so in a few months."

"That is all right. Do not worry about it on new year's day. I wish you good luck for the new year," said uncle, glancing at Third Brother to see if he was listening. Then he added blandly as if by an afterthought, "I beg your pardon for these children's impoliteness."

We felt ashamed of ourselves and realized that First Uncle was right. We were proud of him.

4

I cherish the bright memories of this new year season as the last one of the old days, for this was 1926, and during this year, for us so happily ushered in, the march of armies began.

The Chinese Empire, established 221 B.C., came to an end with the fall of the Manchu dynasty and the proclamation of the Republic of China in 1912, after enduring for 2132 years. The Republic was an expression of a new spirit and a new hope, but that hope gradually faded, for in most government offices it was a change in name only and the same officials continued as before. Indeed this was all that was possible until time permitted the training of a new generation of officials in the techniques of democratic self-government.

This resulted in a weak central government during the first period of fifteen years. No matter how good the intentions or able the plans, the lack of trained personnel and the vastness of the country made them largely ineffective. This left the way open for the war lords who characterize the period.

Now a second revolution had started in the south, and in the next year conquered part of the country, received the sub-

mission of the rest, and established the new Nationalist Government in Nanking.

In interior districts like ours, disturbed conditions were an inevitable consequence during such a period. Not that such conditions were new in China. But at this time they became worse.

All this now affected my sheltered life, for soon after the new year we had a series of robberies. These were for us the first signs of storm. They began with our shops, but there were numerous attempts on our household also, and the thieves seemed to know when the men of the family were away. However, there were too many of us and someone would always discover the thieves and raise the alarm.

This was at its worst during the winter months when it grew dark early, but more particularly because then the water was low in the stream that flowed under an arch in the city wall, and robbers could wade in. Ours was the first place they came to and our orchard had a low wall so that they could easily get in and climb our trees to spy on us. During those months we had to bring in clerks from the shops and the husbands of our women servants to patrol the place and let them know that there were men ready to repel any attack. I remember vividly the two tables laid out nightly with guns, spears, and knives.

In addition we were subjected to constant annoyance such as yelling and shrieking at night, designed to frighten us, and amply succeeding so far as I was concerned. The worst was the throwing of stones. Sixth Brother was hit one night and severely bruised, and several others had close calls.

We learned later that one main reason for these constant attacks was that First Uncle had been concerned in bringing some of the gang to justice when they had robbed us several years before, and they had vowed vengeance. We finally obtained partial immunity by making a regular monthly payment to this gang, but we still were occasionally bothered by others.

III

The Marriage of Second Sister

ONE DAY I was in my mother's room when First Aunt and mother were talking. They got up from where they were sitting and, walking to the door, peeped through the bamboo curtain. I followed. My aunt whispered:

"Look! That is Mr. Chow who is acting as the marriage go-between for Ah Sen." Ah Sen was Second Sister's little-girl name.

Mr. Chow was one of First Uncle's good friends, who had come to him on behalf of the Chen family to propose that his daughter, who was now fourteen, be betrothed to their eldest son. The Chens were one of the twelve gentry families that monopolized scholastic status and official position in our city and with whom we had close business relations.

What I saw was a man about fifty years old and elegantly dressed. As he rose and bowed to uncle with his hat off, I could see his bald head. Uncle escorted him to the gate, where they bowed to each other again.

There was no courtship, or even love letters. The entire matter was under discussion by grandmother, First Uncle, and First Aunt. Second Sister merely heard about it indirectly.

This universal custom of that time was illustrated by the slumber ditty that our nurses and slave girls used to sing as they rocked babies to sleep, again in the original poetical scheme:

Change

Moonlight clear
Shining here.
 Grandsire eats
Babe lies near.

 "Whose girl-child is that?"
 "My granddaughter dear."

"Yet betrothed?"
 "Fixed last spring."
"In what place?"
 "In Nanking."

Of course Second Sister had not been betrothed in infancy, but countless children are.

She was a pretty girl with a heavy fringe of black hair across her forehead, long slender eyebrows, red cheeks, small mouth, and pointed chin. One eye was slightly more oblique than the other, which gave a piquant aspect to her features, which were accentuated by a smile that seemed always to begin but never quite came to fruition, as if she had some fascinating secret she was keeping to herself.

She now became very demure and shy and would not talk to us about it, so we children began to tease her. Sixth Brother was the leader. He stuffed a pillow under his jacket at the back and ran into her room.

"Second Sister," he called, "do you know what the Chen boy looks like?" He turned to reveal his hunchback and then ran away.

Sixth Sister stuck pieces of peanut shell all over her face. "See, he is pockmarked like me," she said.

I went in limping and cried out, "Look, he is lame like me."

Second Sister tried to catch us but we ran away. Of course none of us knew what sort of person he really was and no one in our household had even seen his picture.

Second Brother was a student in the college of law, and the modern scholar of the family. He was opposed to this sort of betrothal. She was his own sister and they were very fond of each other. He talked to her about his new ideas and she became worried and upset. He even ventured to raise the question with First Uncle.

"May I have your permission, father," he asked, standing respectfully before him, "to bring some of my classmates home for a visit during vacation?"

"Certainly," said First Uncle in his big voice. "Bring as many as you wish."

"Thank you, father," said Second Brother, "and would you be willing to ask grandmother to let Second Sister join us a time or two for music or games?"

His father looked at him in astonishment. "Can't you and your friends entertain yourselves?" he asked dryly. "Your sister is not a professional entertainer, you know."

"Oh," said First Brother in distress, for professional entertainers are women of little morals, "I did not intend to imply anything of the sort."

"I know it," said First Uncle kindly. "But what is your idea?"

"I thought my friends would like to meet my sister and that she might like to meet them."

"Have you talked to your sister about this?" his father asked sharply.

"Yes, father," he replied resolutely, "all the young people of my generation talk about this question."

"Becoming a matchmaker, are you?" First Uncle inquired sarcastically.

Second Brother flinched, for the matchmaker has little reputation. "No, father," he said steadily. "I only wish my sister to have a chance to make her own choice."

First Uncle looked at him for a long time, while he continued to stand motionless and respectful. Finally he spoke.

"You know that we are considering an alliance with the Chen family?"

"Yes, father," his son admitted, but continued sturdily, "the family is excellent, but I don't like that young man as a husband for Second Sister."

"I did not ask you that," his father said shortly, and there was another long pause. "We are a progressive family," he said meditatively, "but in this you go too far."

"Is that your answer?" his son persisted.

"That is my answer," First Uncle replied. "I am deeply concerned to see my daughter well married, brilliantly married, in fact. You seem to overlook that."

Second Brother started to reply but thought better of it. "Have I your permission to retire?" he asked.

First Uncle waved his hand and his son bowed and left.

Second Brother had a lot of radical ideas. He wanted an up-to-date wedding ceremony. He disliked the idea of the bride being carried concealed in the red bridal chair. But his chief aversion was the traditional costume.

"I don't want my sister to look like an actress in a classical drama," he would say. "Who wants to marry a museum piece? I want a real live woman of today, and one who dresses the part."

He even carried this so far as to buy the goods for a wedding gown for sister. It was beautiful silk, of a shimmering shade of pink that we had never seen before. It was passed from room to room and all in our little woman's world fingered it with "ai-yas" of admiration and envy. Second Sister was entranced and began to think that there might be something in her favorite brother's new ideas after all.

2

One day Mr. Chow came again and brought to uncle the red paper with the boy's name together with a record of the year, month, day, and hour of his birth. First Uncle presented it to grandmother and then spread it on the altar in the reception hall, beseeching the blessing of the ancestors. He gave in return Second Sister's horoscope. This brought things to a head.

Two days later Second Sister whispered to me to come to her room as the others who shared it would be busy on various household tasks. She was very mysterious about it for it was not easy to have a secret conversation in our crowded establishment.

"You must help me," she whispered. "You are Dan Da. You have the gall of the family."

I grinned deprecatingly, taking this complacently as a compliment. "What do you want me to do?"

"You know that horoscope? I want you to look and see what it really says."

"Don't you believe . . ." I started to ask, and then broke off as I realized what she wanted. I had heard my elders talking about this and knew that if anything untoward happened during the three days that the horoscope was presented before the ancestors, it would be regarded as a bad omen and might even break off the negotiations.

"I'll do it," I said, and Second Sister gave me a good hug.

"It had better be soon," she said, "for this is the second day."

When I got to the reception hall it was empty except for Jem Po, who was just beginning to sweep it. This would take a long time, and if I waited I feared someone else might come, so I went ahead. I pulled a chair over and climbed up to take

a look and as I did so managed to knock down a wine cup, which fell to the floor and broke. I ran to Jem Po.

"There has been an accident," I told her, "and a wine cup has been broken. Please don't tell."

I had no more than gotten away when grandmother happened to come along on one of her rounds of inspection. Her sharp eyes noticed the broken cup, and she at once placed the responsibility on Jem Po, as she was in charge of the hall. Jem Po said nothing about my having been there. When I heard about this my conscience began to hurt. I was loath to lay the blame on Jem Po, but I was unwilling to slap my own face. So I had to make up a story to save both of us. I ran immediately to grandmother.

"My honorable grandmother! It wasn't Jem Po's fault. I saw the black cat jump up on the table. Perhaps she broke it."

Grandmother accepted this without question. "It must be fate," she sighed.

Grandmother asked Jem Po to bring her the red paper from the altar. She folded it up and threw it into a drawer. To my mind that was the end of the affair. I thought with satisfaction that I had been successful and went and told Second Sister. She smiled happily and embraced me.

In thinking this over in later years it occurred to me that this plan was probably worked out by Second Brother, as I do not believe that Second Sister would ever have thought it out by herself. Naturally Second Brother had to keep in the background in a stratagem of this sort.

A few days later Mr. Chow came again smiling. He brought a satisfactory report from the Chen family. The two horoscopes were in agreement. He asked for our decision. Uncle was unwilling to refuse his friend and make him lose face, so he delayed his reply.

One afternoon, grandmother and First Aunt were discussing

this affair when they heard a muffled "pung-pung, pung, pung-pung," which was made by a man beating a water-buffalo horn with a stick and advertised the approach of our local itinerant fortuneteller.

"Let us consult the spirits," suggested First Aunt.

"We might as well get the matter settled," sighed grandmother, and ordered Jem Po to summon the man to divine whether the proposed marriage would be prosperous or not.

This was the same man who had been summoned concerning my father's illness, older and shabbier than last time, but with the same rusty black umbrella and bag and the same bamboo cage with the brown bird hopping about inside. The two horoscopes were handed to him by a slave girl. He reported an exact correspondence between them. Then he proceeded to divination by his little brown bird. He took out a number of cards from his black cotton bag. He shuffled them and put them on the table. Then he addressed the bird.

"Spiritual bird! Spiritual bird! Examine this affair intelligently. Carefully select a favorable divination."

He opened the door of the cage. The bird danced out, hopped around the cards, cocked his head, and finally picked one up. The fortuneteller took the card, rewarded the bird with a few grains of wheat from his little box, and returned him to his cage.

That bird decided my sister's fate. I hold him responsible for all the train of circumstances that resulted.

The fortuneteller held up the card, on which I could see a picture of an old man sitting under a tree with a book in his hands. Then he arose and, holding the card reverently in both hands, bowed formally and low to grandmother and First Aunt in turn.

"This is Yueh Lao," he announced impressively. "He brings you good fortune."

"Who is Yueh Lao?" I asked.

The old man leaned back and smiled. "He is the old man in the moon who unites by an invisible thread the feet of those persons destined to be married to each other." He sipped his tea and went on, "In the Tang Dynasty there was a young scholar who traveled to the capital for his civil service examination. On his journey he met Yueh Lao, who was examining a book under a tree by moonlight. The young man approached him and asked what book it was. Yueh Lao replied that it was the World Marriage Book."

The fortuneteller took a couple of leisurely whiffs from his pipe, sipped some tea, and continued:

"The young man asked if he could tell him who his future wife would be, and the old man turned page after page until he found the place.

" 'She is four years old now,' he said. 'She is the daughter of so-and-so in such and such a village.'

"The young man went to the village, where he found a hut on the street indicated, and an ugly little girl of the name that Yueh Lao had told him. He could not believe it. He, a scholar of a rich family, could not marry an uneducated girl of a poor low-class family. So he went away.

"Year after year, he passed one examination after another until he got the highest degree. The head of the national civil service regarded him so highly that he gave him his own daughter to wife. He remembered the earlier prophecy but dared not refuse. After their marriage they were very happy and loved each other very much."

The fortuneteller raised his teacup.

"Yueh Lao's word failed," said I.

"Be quiet," hushed grandmother.

The fortuneteller sipped his tea. He crossed his left leg over the right one.

"One day the young wife told about her childhood," he continued. "She was the girl Yueh Lao had told him of. She had been sold by her parents as a slave girl to the head of the civil service and his wife, who had loved her so much that they adopted her as their own daughter.

"Now, Little Elder Sister," he demanded, suddenly turning to me. "Did Yueh Lao's word fail?"

He now returned the two red papers to grandmother.

"It is very clear and favorable. These two persons are a heaven-made match."

So the final decision was made.

3

The Chen family now sent a letter making the formal proposal of marriage. With the letter came jewelry and silks as presents for Second Sister, various kinds of food for the wedding festivities, boxes of confectionery, which we children enjoyed very much, and rolls of silver dollars for the parents. First Uncle had the servants lay out the presents in grandmother's room. In the most conspicuous position was a live chicken, its feet bound by a red string. This is by custom the most important present of the marriage ceremony, based on the story of Yueh Lao.

Sister's dowry consisted of over a hundred dresses, bedding, furniture, jewelry, money, and three slave girls. The first was Beautiful Plum Blossom, who was sister's personal maid. She was as pretty as her name, with pale ivory skin and rosy cheeks. The second was the daughter of our sewing woman, who had grown up in our home. The third was a little girl of seven, who was plain but strong, and was already developing into a maid of all work.

Early the next spring, the Chen family sent a red letter

announcing the lucky day for the wedding. It was accompanied by more presents. Pork and noodles were the main ones, which we sent on to our friends and relatives announcing the marriage date. To the groom's family we sent in return a thousand dumplings and homemade cakes of flour with sweet stuff inside and brown hemp seeds on top. Some were as large as a small tea stand, but most were about the size of a plate. They were wrapped up in pairs with a red paper design on the top of each pair. The dumplings were piled in a red barrel decorated with evergreen branches and flowers. The groom's family used these cakes and dumplings to send to their relatives and friends in announcing the day.

Our preparations began nine months before the wedding day. Everyone was busy. All of us girls especially enjoyed making thread from hemp fiber and weaving the towels and braid which were a bride's first gift to every guest when she arrived in the groom's family, and as we worked we sang the folk songs that girls were accustomed to sing in our province.

> Su family little girl named Chen Chen
> Cheeks like peonies, coy with men.
> Eleven learn mirror, paint and powder,
> Twelve learn needlework, sew, embroider,
> Thirteen music—sad or gay.
> Should such talents be hid away?
> Hair fresh-vegetable-fashion bound,
> Flapping sleeves spread perfume round.

One day Orchid Blossom took me into the orchard, where two girls were picking the flowers of the fingernail plant. They were white, red, and yellow. We picked the red ones. Finally we had a basketful. One of the girls crushed them in a small stone mortar and steeped them with alum. Then we all crowded into Second Sister's room and she gave us each a

portion of the red paste on a piece of green banana leaf and put some on each fingernail and wrapped it with hemp leaves and tied it with thread. After she had finished me and my sisters, she dyed the fingers of six of the slave girls. As our fingers were bandaged and stiff, we could not help Second Sister with hers, so one of the girls went to get the sewing woman to help. But she shook her head.

"You had better keep your fingers clean because your wedding is near," she advised Second Sister. "If you dye your fingers overnight, the red color cannot be washed out and only disappears as the nail wears off."

So Second Sister didn't dye her fingers.

Next morning I awoke early, and the first thing I did was to unwrap my fingers. They were a beautiful deep red, and although I washed them with soap, the color didn't fade.

4

A few days before the wedding all our relatives and friends were invited to our home. Most of the women and children came several days early, for an occasion like this furnished one of their few opportunities for social contacts outside their own homes and was valued accordingly. Watermelon seeds and tea were served everywhere. Some played cards. All talked. Male guests were in the big reception hall. Children were everywhere. Second Sister's room was constantly crowded with women talking and laughing, but she remained quiet as the etiquette of the occasion demanded, and neither spoke nor laughed.

A wedding was a clan matter. There was no religious ceremony. It was merely the celebration of a contract between the two clans concerned. The head of the clan naturally presided. This was Sze Pa Kung—Fourth Elder Grand-Uncle, the head

of our clan of three thousand souls, a position to which he succeeded when my grandfather died. Sze Pa Kung was almost a legendary character with us. I had heard him mentioned countless times but had never seen him and had a great curiosity to do so.

He was very old and colorless, as if he were already dead and propped up in his chair for us to worship. He had the same kind of post-mortem stiffness and vast dignity. His face was long, narrow, and lean. The corners of his mouth turned down, and his mandarin mustache turned down, so that together they seemed to frame his thin lips in a double parenthesis. He had a small pointed beard that stuck out almost straight instead of down, and this gave him an oddly aggressive aspect that fitted in with his reputation for arbitrary action and for great keenness in justifying it against any criticism. It was a cruel face, I thought. Certainly I did not see him smile once during what for all the rest of us was a most festive occasion.

He dressed the part, and his clothes seemed to me to have a superior air of elegance, although I could not put my finger on any very tangible difference. Perhaps it was the way he wore them, for he walked with a stiff hauteur and would lift his gown slightly when stepping over doorsills.

However all this might be, he certainly was an impressive master of ceremonies and carried things through with precision and dramatic effect. He was also in charge of all such matters as invitations, records, arrangement of dowry, and legal affairs. Presents were piled up beside his desk and duly recorded.

The feasting opened on the night before the wedding. After the first five courses, firecrackers were set off. Then Sze Pa Kung marched to the main entrance, turned to face the guests, and announced the bride.

"Our little elder sister will now make her bow and her acknowledgments."

All the guests stood up as Second Sister in her red wedding

finery came in, accompanied by two bridesmaids, proceeded slowly to the south of the reception hall, and made three bows to all the guests, who returned them. She then went from table to table, in order of seniority, to pay her respects by pledging each in a cup of wine.

In the seat of honor at the first table was a little girl who represented Second Sister's maternal grandmother. Here was an awkward situation. First Aunt's parents had of course been invited, and by custom should occupy the position of honor. But while our family had gone up in the world, theirs had scarcely maintained the modest, not to say shabby, position of the time when First Aunt had married into our family. This was the real basis of First Uncle's contempt for his wife, along with her inability to adjust herself to our more exalted status. Her family realized this very keenly and, except for First Aunt herself, we had little contact with them. They knew that even the best appearance they could possibly make would not prevent them from losing a lot of face by dramatizing and making explicit what everybody understood perfectly well but were too polite to put into words. So they had gotten around the difficulty by a method that was customary in such circumstances. The invitation was duly accepted and all the polite usage complied with, as inexorable custom required. But a junior member of the family was sent to represent it.

Thus it came about that instead of paying her respects to her grandmother, who remained unhappily in her home a few blocks away, Second Sister faced a little girl of her own generation as her grandmother's representative. This was a hard position for the little girl, who had never been in such surroundings before and didn't know what to do but shyly hung her head. A servant filled her cup with wine, and a lady sitting next to her at the table gently and kindly showed her how to hold up the cup to pledge Second Sister and make a bow.

After the feasting, the musicians continued to play, and the

wedding gifts were exhibited. Then the head of the clan checked them again and saw them sealed with red paper, ready to be borne in procession to Second Sister's new home the following day.

Early the next morning, the bridal chair with its red decorations came from the groom's family, accompanied by a troop of musicians. Second Sister was crying in her room as the custom was. Otherwise she would be teased about wanting to get married. The women of the family came in one by one to bid her a tearful farewell.

Dowry and gifts were sent before noon, carried by bearers who formed a long procession.

Toward evening, Second Sister was summoned by her mother to be dressed. Her hair was combed by one of our relatives who was a person of good fortune—one who had both husband and sons. Second Sister wore a red silk jacket and skirt, both embroidered with phoenixes and peonies, the emblems of marital felicity. A red veil covered her from head to foot. She was escorted to the bridal chair by six women of good fortune, and as the chair was lifted by its four bearers, rice was scattered over it to avoid evil influences.

The procession started. First came two great paper lanterns with the name of the groom's clan in large black characters. Then the musicians. Then the sedan chair with the bride. Last followed three more sedan chairs with her three slave girls.

The fifth day, Second Sister and her husband were invited to our home as guests of honor. Second Sister was in her old room with all the women around her. We smaller children were edging in and trying to have a look at the bridegroom, who was with the men in the reception hall, but were repeatedly sent scattering by Third Uncle. So we went to the back door of the reception hall, lay down flat on our stomachs, and peeped through the cat hole. We could just barely see the bridegroom.

Sixth Brother got the first look. "He's not a hunchback," he said aggrievedly.

"I'm glad that he's not pockmarked," said Sixth Sister, who came next.

Then it was my turn. I could not be sure whether he was lame or not, as he was seated. I maintained that he was. So we got into a hot whispered argument.

"He's lame," I said triumphantly. "I can tell by the way he is sitting."

"Pooh," said Sixth Sister. "He's sitting just like everybody else."

"We'll have to wait till he moves," said Sixth Brother, "I'll lie down and watch," and he did so as we looked on doubtfully.

"See here," said Sixth Sister after this had gone on for a while, "I can watch just as well as you. Let me look."

Sixth Brother shook his head, and when sister tried to shove him to one side he began pushing and kicking her away, and when I tried, I got the same treatment. Sixth looked at me. I looked at her. Then we seized a leg apiece and snaked him away from the hole. But alas, the sound of our scuffling was heard by Third Uncle, so we were driven away, this time for good, and didn't get a good look at the groom at all.

IV

The Death of My Father

THAT SAME year, the year I was seven, we had a stormy winter and father returned from a business trip with a cold and a high fever. He refused to do anything about it at first, saying he was tired and all he needed was a good rest. When he got worse instead of better a doctor was called in, but as his regular doctor was sick, there was question about the medicine prescribed by the substitute, Third Uncle holding that it was far too strong. All this was not helpful.

Our entire household was deeply concerned. Tse Sao, our cook, offered prayer before the kitchen god, lighting candles and burning incense, putting her palms together and lifting them in supplication. Ni Niang, our sewing woman, frequently stopped her work and turned her eyes upward with a long sigh. I heard her murmuring, "O Ruler of Heaven, open your spiritual eye upon us. Be propitious and give us aid."

One evening at the end of the fourth week, father became much worse. All realized that the end was near, and the ancient rituals began. Cook prepared the five raw foods. Then she took off her apron and dressed herself in a new blue dress with black double borders, and new black skirt with a blue border. Her hair was combed smooth and shiny in a knot with a pink artificial flower in it. She then swept

the reception hall, especially before the ancestral altar. Then she swept my father's room with a new broom, from the top of each wall to the bottom. As she swept she murmured:

Sweep out evil and disease.
Keep in health and peace.

This she repeated over and over many times. Then she made offerings of uncooked food, rice, noodles, and beancake, to the lesser spirits of the door, the passageway, and the well.

Next she brought in the sacrificial food to the reception hall, where First Uncle received it ceremonially and arranged it on the altar table in front of the cabinet of ancestors, and poured the wine into five wine cups in a row. Then he placed three bowls of uncooked rice, wheat, and beans in the second row, and chicken, pork, and fish in the third. The chicken at one end was killed and cleaned, but was whole, with the head and outspread wings supported by chopsticks so that it stood up and looked ready to fly away. In the middle was a leg of pork in place of the whole pig. A dried fish at the other end stood on its tail, propped upright by a chopstick stuck into a piece of potato placed in the bowl.

The whole house became deathly quiet. Everybody had an air of grief.

Grandmother now came slowly out from her room with her slave girls. She lighted a bundle of incense and placed it in the incense burner in front of the cabinet of the ancestors. She made a bow. Then, with difficulty, she knelt down and struck her head three times on the stone floor. Then she painfully got up with the help of the two girls. This she did three times. Each time she prayed: "O Honorable Ancestors, I pray you, intercede for mercy from Heaven to prolong his life."

My mother came, and went through the same ritual and prayed the same prayer. Then grandmother told Third Brother and me to do likewise.

2

Early next morning I was wakened by Orchid Blossom and brought to my father's bed. His eyes could not open. I could hear the gurglings from his throat. My mother tried to feed him with a spoon of warm salty water, but his teeth became locked tight. He could neither eat nor drink. His face looked unnatural. Mother was in tears. She spoke wildly.

"Oh, speak to me. Your little children are before you. Do you have no words for them?"

He made no reply and she fell on her knees.

"Oh Heaven! Let me change places with him!"

Grandmother came in leaning heavily on her two slave girls and sobbing. She looked at him and lifted up her voice.

"My son, my son! How can you pass away and leave your old mother alone!"

First Uncle came in and wept loudly.

"Second Brother! We have been twenty-nine years as brethren, sharing joys and sorrows. Through these many years you have always obeyed my orders. You are my right hand. How can I live on without you, Second Brother?"

But father was beyond making any reply.

First Aunt was half distracted, and vocal in her grief.

"I feel myself to blame," she said with tears. "I feel myself to blame. If that worthless daughter of mine, little Toto, had not spoken of death at the new year's feast, this calamity would never have happened."

Third Aunt tried to reassure her and make light of it, but she only wept and protested the more.

And little Toto, being told of this, wept for the entire day and refused to be comforted.

Father was now moved out to the reception hall and placed on a wooden trestle with his feet toward the door. Soon he ceased to breathe, and suddenly the whole house was full of the sound of wailing and stamping of feet. I was told to kneel down beside my brother at my father's feet with head bent down and call, "Loong Po, Loong Po," without stopping. This is the post-mortem ritual term for father.

A table was set beside him with offerings of food. Paper money was burned. A lamp was lighted, to be kept continuously burning through many days and nights. The coffin was brought in and placed in the center of the reception hall. It was made of four wide planks, from three to four inches in thickness, of a hard and durable wood. Into it many bags of lime were placed.

3

Through grandmother's room I could see mother's room, where Peony, one of my mother's slave girls, was taking all the fresh flowers from the vases and throwing them into the dustpan. To my childish mind this was queer because she knew that my mother loved fresh flowers very much and a regular part of her work was to water them every morning. But now she was killing mother's flowers on this day of grief. I tried to stop her by making a face at her but she paid no attention. First Uncle saw me and gently pressed my head down again and whispered urgently, "Pay respect to your father and don't turn your head away. Don't stop calling 'Loong Po.'"

After a while Peony came to me. She took off the red hair ribbons from my head, unbraided my hair, took off my

bracelets and rings, and dressed me in an ugly hemp dress without border or hem. I objected, but in vain.

"Why did you take away my mother's favorite flowers?" I whispered.

She replied, "E Lou-Yie"—as she usually called my father—"is dead and now for twenty-seven months we cannot touch fresh flowers or wear red things or put on pretty dresses."

I looked over at my mother. Her hair was disordered and the hairpins and other jewelry she wore on ordinary days were all discarded.

The lower halves of my fingernails were still red from being dyed with the fingernail plant. This violated the rules of mourning and caused a lot of discussion, but grandmother finally decided that nothing could be done about it, and the best thing was to ignore it. However, I was told to keep my fists shut tight when we had guests. This I was careful to do.

For hours now Third Brother and I had been kneeling. Once in a while Orchid Blossom would come and take me to the kitchen, where cook would have some hot soup ready for me.

"That child cannot keep this up without some food once in a while," she told Orchid Blossom. "You bring her every hour or so." Then I would be led back to resume my vigil.

My mother was prostrated and had taken to her bed, but it was upon us two, as his orphaned descendants, that the ritual observances devolved, as our brother and sister were both dead. It is at this point that descendants are of supreme importance, for those who die with no children of their own blood to perform the rites for the dead, and care for them, become hungry ghosts and wander in darkness forever. My knees ached from kneeling on the stone floor and my throat was dry from calling "Loong Po, Loong Po," but we continued our vigil just the same.

It was now dark and only two guttering candles lighted the great reception hall. The red-lacquered pillars mounted into the gloom over my head and I could no longer see the roof above me. As the candle flames flickered in the wind, the shadows slid around and were in constant motion as if a host of evil spirits were swarming in this abode of death.

I had never been in the reception hall before at night and was used to much smaller rooms, where I could see everything. I was afraid of the dark anyway, and the black spaces around me magnified my fear manifold. To be sure Third Brother was there also, but although he was my own brother I scarcely knew him, as he had been sleeping in the men's courtyard and eating with them for the last three years, since I was four. Then he was usually taciturn, and now grief had rendered him almost totally inarticulate. I looked toward him from time to time for some word or sign of sympathy, but he seemed oblivious of me. I felt terribly alone.

At the far end of the hall several tailors were working on funeral garments by the light of a candle. Now came four undertaker's assistants and began to bring the clothing and other materials for the coffining. As they went back and forth with their burdens they cast monstrous shadows on the wall to join the company of little shadows already lurking there. This frightened me still more.

The undertaker's assistants now began to wash the body and to dress it in these new clothes, which were without buttons. I did not think my father would like to be dressed in that way. He was always neat and never had a single button missing when he was alive. They kept putting on suit after suit, one over the other, until my bony father looked like a mountain.

When they finished dressing him, they bound his body with black silk bands. They first tightened these with their

hands, then braced their feet against his body and pulled. This was shocking to me, for my father was always dignified and treated with great respect by other people and had never been touched by anyone's feet in all his life. It left me incapable of motion or speech.

The four men tugged again. "Crack! Crack!" It sounded as if father's bones were being broken.

I whispered excitedly to my brother kneeling beside me.

"Third Brother, look! They are hurting our honorable father."

"No. Be quiet and bend down your head," he answered. "Go on repeating 'Loong Po.'"

Then it came again. "Crack! Crack! Crack!" I cried out:

"Oh! My honorable father. You are hurt. You are hurt."

I could stand it no longer and burst out in loud weeping. I jumped up and ran over to the workmen.

"Please stop," I begged them. "Oh please. You are hurting my father terribly."

But they did not stop.

Then I seized the leg of the man who had his foot on my father and tried to push it away but was not strong enough, so I began to strike it with my fists.

Even then they did not stop, so I climbed frantically onto the trestle and covered my father with my body to protect him.

"Oh, my father, my honorable father," I cried over and over.

The men were forced to stop and call for someone to come. After a while Orchid Blossom came and led me gently away.

Later I was brought out again. The whole family, except grandmother, now followed First Uncle in a solemn procession around the coffin. This is called *kuan kuang,* "closing the

coffin." Orchid Blossom carried me on her back so that I was able to see First Uncle put something that gleamed like a pearl into father's mouth and some silver dollars into his hands. Then the coffin was closed in the presence of the whole family.

After the cover was nailed down, Kiu Kung gave a signal and the servants brought in a sedan chair with four bearers, about one third of life size, made of blue and white paper over a bamboo framework. This was placed at the foot of the coffin, between it and the top of the steps, facing outward. Kiu Kung stepped forward and solemnly set it on fire, and we watched it burn in silence until nothing but dead ashes remained. I knew then that my father was gone and that this would bear him on his way.

The the wailing began. Third Brother now stood beside the coffin, and I was with the rest of the women at one end of the hall, behind a curtain of coarse white cotton cloth. Each voiced her own sorrow. First Aunt was repeating, "He died too soon, died too soon." Mother kept exclaiming, "Call me, and I will go with you," over and over and over. I went on repeating "Loong Po, Loong Po, Loong Po."

4

The period of mourning was three years, in accord with Confucian custom. Actually this was interpreted as twenty-seven months. During this time the coffin remained in our reception hall. Every day for a year, three meals and midnight and early-morning refreshment were offered before the coffin with wailing, stamping of feet, and burning of paper money.

Special Buddhist ceremonies were held every seven days for the first seven weeks after father's death, for which Buddhist monks were engaged. A three-storey platform was

built in the reception hall. On the top sat three Buddhist monks in their yellow robes, chanting sutras, beating the wooden fish, and ringing bronze bells. Sometimes they chanted one by one, and sometimes together. There was also a band of musicians with two drums, a large gong, chimes and cymbals. With these the emphasis was on noise, and the performers were energetic and efficient. Then there were small trumpets, which are most important for funerals as their sound is more sorrowful than that of the other instruments. The music of this band accompanied the wooden fish and the hand bells of the Buddhist monks.

Cooked food was offered on the table beside the coffin. Paper money was burned before it. All the women of the family wailed and stamped when the monk signaled.

Every seventh evening an iron pagoda was placed at the side of the platform. Numbers of shallow clay dishes were set on the balcony of each storey. Each dish was filled with oil on which floated a wick of bamboo pith. These gave a soft light that was very peaceful.

Calling back the soul was the climax of these ceremonies and took place on the seventh day of the seventh week. Third Brother was given a tray with a paper tablet on an upright of wood, in front of which was placed a lighted candle and incense. He carried it high and, led by one of the monks, marched slowly and solemnly around the hall ten times. This ended just at midnight, and the three monks marched outside the gate to the shore of a near-by stream, where they blew a conch shell loudly. This was to call back the soul, to summon it to return from its wanderings over land and sea. It made a mournful sound, and when it had ceased we stood motionless in the soft darkness and waited for his soul's return. But we heard only the night wind and the thin plashing of the little stream.

At the end of this seven-week period, the relatives ceased to wear mourning. Mother, Third Brother, and I continued to do so until after the burial.

Another special ceremony summoned the spirit to reside in its ancestral tablet. This was held on a propitious day, determined by divination, and came a little over a year after my father's death. Three men, all relatives, all famous men in Kan San and Confucian scholars and officials of rank, took their places on the three-storey platform. The head of our clan sat on one side, my mother's father on the other, and my third aunt's father-in-law, who presided as the one with the highest official position, sat in the middle.

A wooden ancestral tablet was handed up to the official in the middle, who placed it on the table. Third Brother then kneeled down and a man tied his finger with a thread, pricked it with a needle, and collected the blood in a dish. Then he mixed it with a red pigment. This he handed to the presiding official, who wet a brush-pen in the blood and made a dot that changed the character "Wong" into the character "Chu." This was one character in the inscription which read, "Wong Ju-hwa's spirit's dwelling seat." The character "Ju" means to dwell or abide, and this ceremony meant that the spirit of my father had now come to take up its residence there. When this was completed, the tablet was placed ceremonially in the cabinet along with those of the rest of our ancestors.

5

Two years after my father's death and three months before the burial day, a number of workmen brought bamboo and paper of various colors to our house and made three large paper buildings as tall as the door, with roof, floor, walls, doors,

windows, furniture, all complete. The tallest one had a courtyard, reception room, bedroom, and kitchen also. It was fully furnished with slaves, servants, wives, concubines, children, chests of clothes, boxes of money, two lions at the gate, and guardians at the door. It represented our house, while the other two were the pawnshop and another shop. The heads of these figures were made of clay, and the eyes depicted with ink. All wore rich costumes.

Two weeks before the burial, white cards with blue characters were sent out to invite all relatives, near and distant. On the burial day, everyone wore coarse white hemp or cotton clothes. Sze Pa Kung, as head of our clan, took charge. Kiu Kung helped him in pasting red paper with the name of the occupant on the door of each sedan chair so as to follow the correct order of precedence, based on seniority and nearness or remoteness of relationship.

The funeral procession formed for the three-mile journey to our family grave plot. First came a man carrying a paper image called "The God who Opens the Road." Next were men bearing two large oiled-paper lanterns with our family name on them. Then came two white banners. Following them came bands of musicians, and twelve high officials in their robes of office. Then marched a long line of male relatives.

The ancestral soul-tablet of my father with its red dot of my brother's blood was carried to the grave in the first sedan chair. This enabled my father's spirit to know the place of his body's burial. Four officials of our city in ceremonial dress walked two on each side. The second sedan chair carried father's portrait.

Then came the male members of our family, partly curtained off by a wide length of coarse white cotton cloth, and weeping audibly.

Next was the coffin, covered by a pall and carried by

eighteen men. A white cock was tethered on its top and from time to time struggled and flapped its wings. My elder brother and I walked immediately before the coffin. Each of us held a bamboo wand wrapped with white paper. Every time I heard the cock flapping its wings I was afraid it would get loose, but didn't dare to look back.

Following the coffin were the paper effigies of houses and various other paraphernalia.

Last was a long line of sedan chairs for female relatives and friends. The occupants were invisible behind the chair curtains, but their status was indicated by a richly attired slave girl who marched either just in front between the poles of the chair or beside it. This was considered, on the female side, to confer a distinction equivalent to official rank on the male side, and all who did not have slave girls of suitable appearance and age—strict families did not approve of young women of marriageable age being thus exposed to public gaze—were at pains to borrow them from friends and relatives. One or two chairs were carried empty, their red labels and the slave girls marching beside them representing mourners who were unable to be present.

When the procession had gone out the city gates and through the suburbs, a considerable number, including most of the slave girls, dropped out, having done what custom required, and returned home. The family and immediate relatives settled down to the long trip to the grave. I plodded along more and more wearily, and Kiu Kung, seeing this, came and led me by the hand, and when I began to stumble too often, had one of the servants carry me on his back.

When we arrived at the mountainside where our family graves were, the white banners were put on the coffin, which was then placed in position above ground and covered with earth and cement. My brother and I put our wands on top. Then the white cock was sacrificed and the paper houses and

utensils burned, followed by a sacrificial offering of food, with candles and incense. As the final act of worship we made our last obeisance, one by one.

Then our white mourning clothes and shoes were buried near-by, for if they were taken back home someone else in the family would die. Then father's soul-tablet was escorted back by eight of the chief male mourners, to "return and dwell" in the ancestral shrine of our branch in our reception hall.

We returned home, having changed our mourning clothes to the festive costumes we had not touched for twenty-seven months, and sat down to a ceremonial feast. At the end the guests left without any formality, for etiquette does not permit one to say thanks for a funeral repast.

6

During this long period my mother was like one with no will to live in this world. Her grief went far deeper than the conventional routine of mourning, severe as that was. Indeed for five years she did not smile or go out of her room except for mourning ceremonies. She would sit motionless for long periods. I used to sit with her. When she roused herself it was usually to read poetry.

For her this was an irreparable bereavement. It involved the loss not only of a beloved husband but also of her status as a marriageable woman—she was only twenty-eight—and doomed her to a never ending widowhood. I am sure that in all the years that have gone by since then the idea of remarriage has never entered her head. Nor has it occurred to any of the family to arrange another marriage for her, for that would offend the spirit of my father. Even if they had sought to do so, no man of that day who would be a suitable match would have cared to risk it. It was not done.

V

Junior Granduncle

After my father's death, his place in my life was taken by our steward Kiu Kung. I had long been accustomed to bring him most of my small problems. When things went wrong my mother would scold me, but Kiu Kung would help me put them right and was the only one who even attempted to answer all my questions. To my mind, he was a most clever man. I loved him with all my heart. This meant the more to me as mother gave herself up to grief and I got even less of her attention than formerly.

"When will father come back, Kiu Kung?" I would ask him at this time.

"He is in the tomb out on the hill where we buried him," he told me. "Don't you remember?"

"But that is only a grave, not a house," I objected. "How can he live there?"

"He is a spirit, not any longer a man like me," he explained, "so he does not need a house."

I was terribly afraid of ghosts, but felt no fear of my father's spirit. I could not think of him as other than kindly.

"Will he come here sometimes to see us?"

"Perhaps," he said.

Kiu Kung was courtly and had a graceful way of greeting guests by extending his arms, placing the fingertips of his open hands together, and drawing them inward with an

inviting motion, and a similar fashion of bidding them farewell, extending his open hands with the palms upward and inclined slightly outward. He had a friendly face with deep-set, intelligent eyes, and the same long ears that grandmother had, that betokened long life. He had a sparse white beard. He was always stroking it and was very proud of it. I used to wonder whether it was so thin because he wore it out stroking it so much. He dressed like a scholar: blue silk trousers, blue silk gown with a black velvet jacket, and a black silk skullcap. He was never without his long pipe, which he smoked incessantly.

This pipe provided the original basis for our friendship. It was so long that when he held it in his mouth to puff it alight, he could not reach the bowl to ignite it. This long stem was to cool the smoke as it passed through and thus to take some of the bite out of our vicious native tobacco, as was done by bubbling the smoke through water in a water pipe. I used to light it for him, and run to the kitchen to ignite the paper spills we used to rekindle it. They were needed frequently, as the bowl held only enough for a few puffs.

He was very fond of tea. Sometimes he spent a whole afternoon in drinking tea and smoking with my uncle, talking or playing chess. At other times he spent long hours sipping tea and conversing on various subjects with grandmother.

He had two pleasant rooms on the opposite side of a small sunny courtyard away from the noise of the household. In his sitting room was an altar with a gilded Buddha, and on a table before it, covered with a red cloth embroidered with golden dragons, were an incense burner, a wooden fish, a bell, and a Buddhist sutra for chanting. Before the table was a red cushion on which to kneel.

A light was always kept burning before the Buddha, and the space before the altar was cleanly swept by Kiu Kung

himself. He was particularly strict about not allowing any of the children to satisfy nature's needs there. He was even able to enforce this in the case of the toddlers in our household, who were only partially housebroken and accustomed to respond immediately to a call of nature, regardless of time or place, whether public or private, leaving it to a servant or slave girl to sprinkle ashes and mop up after them. He also forbade anyone to swear in presence of the Buddha.

He burned incense and recited prayers every morning and evening. The incense could not be lit at the fire on the hearth lest unclean fuel soil it, in which case the Buddha would not accept it. So every morning he lit the incense with a match. I used to go in and watch, and listen to the "click-click-click" as he tapped the wooden fish with a little wooden mallet to give the cadence, and rattled off the words of the sutra on the table before him, while the smoke of incense drifted slowly upward, and the Buddha remained wrapped in an impenetrable calm.

He was grandmother's younger brother by his father's first wife, who had only these two surviving children. His father, mother, and elder brothers had died when he was small, after which his father's three concubines had treated him very badly, as they had sons who were older and for whom they were maneuvering to get the largest possible share of income and inheritance. It was perhaps because of this experience that he had never married. He had very little family feeling and at his death left his property to a Taoist monastery.

He was a scholar and had studied extensively. But he had no sympathy with the Confucian preoccupation with official life and wanted to be a Taoist, one who withdraws from all responsibility and flees the world to live with the wind and rain on some secluded mountaintop. However, a few trips into the mountains had ended that, for his luxurious and aristo-

cratic upbringing did not fit him for the hermit life, and the Confucian part of him reacted against the wholly illiterate and sometimes half-insane inmates of the Taoist mountain monasteries he visited, whose occult arts easily crossed the border into the realm of the abnormal. So he contented himself with being a Taoist in philosophy, a Buddhist in religion, and a Confucianist in scholarship, and thus exemplified in his own person the "three religions." It is possible to practice all three at once, for membership is not involved. Confucianism is not really a religion, but a rationalization of the structure of Chinese society as a basis for practical living, and takes for granted still older religious practices, such as ancestor worship. Taoism is more mystical and cosmic, and is based on an individualistic revolt against the strict social obligations and taboos of Confucianism. Its main object is life extension rather than Heaven or union with some deity. This it seeks through occult practices. Buddhism, an Indian religion, found entrance to China as a missionary religion because it bore gifts that were new to China: personal religion, organized religion as apart from state or clan religious ceremonies, masses for the dead, personal gods that were approachable, and the Western Paradise.

These constitute the three religions of China. Underlying them is an all-pervading primitive animism, a theory of a demonic universe which commingles with all of them.

Kiu Kung never ate with our family, for he was a vegetarian and had his special food served in his own rooms. Thus he was able to order the Taoist portion of his life almost as freely as if he were in some mountain retreat.

But he was more of the Confucian scholar than he realized, for this was his main interest. Much of his time went into making poems and exchanging them with my uncle or the teacher in our family school. I had already learned from my mother to love poetry. I learned much from Kiu Kung about

how to write it. He would show me a poem he had just received from the teacher, and would recite it over and over to get the feel of the rhyme and rhythm, and then explain it to me. I have one I copied in later years:

I think of you, sir, in the autumn night,
Particularly when the moon is bright.
 When I would fain discuss the new and old
And drink a cup—there's no one to invite.

This called for a reply, and the rules required it should parallel the thought and use the same three rhyming words. He used to ask me to work with him, and I was immensely thrilled when he occasionally adopted a word or phrase I suggested. Here is his answer to the one above:

Longer and longer seems each frosty night.
Though through my casement the same moon shines bright,
 I still feel wholly cheerless and alone—
And in your stead some ancient book invite.

For him and other degree men of the old school the year's climax was the annual poetry contest, which had gone on for centuries and to which they all submitted poems. This was not merely a polite accomplishment. For centuries the government examinations, on which official appointments were based, had included the writing of both essays and poetry. Kiu Kung took me along one hot summer day. Nine ancient scholars sat on the platform, dressed in their robes of office, and made a colorful show, which contrasted oddly with their parchment faces and decrepit frames. All day long they took turns in singing over the poems. I went to sleep during the last hour in the afternoon. This hurt Kiu Kung's feelings and made him lose face. It took me a long time to live it down.

One morning I saw him about to get into a sedan chair for

a trip to the country. With him was a coolie with a rabbit cage hanging from each end of his bamboo carrying pole.

"Where are you taking the rabbits, Kiu Kung?" I asked.

"I am taking them to the Monastery of Soul's Retreat to 'release life,'" he replied seriously.

This was a Buddhist monastery on a wooded hill five miles from the city where he often went to visit his friends among the monks, enjoy the vegetarian food, for which they were famous, and discuss Buddhist philosophy with a learned monk who made it his headquarters.

"What will you do with the rabbits?" I asked further.

"I shall take them into the woods and set them free. Then they will be able to live according to their own natures and I shall acquire merit by doing a good deed," he said.

These rabbits illustrate the stratification of religious belief in our household. Our slave girls ate them in unabashed naturalness as one of the good things of life. Our family merely made pets of them. Kiu Kung set them free to gain merit, a Buddhist practice, thinking that they might be spirits caught in the wheel of transmigration whom he thus might aid.

2

During this time our city blossomed out with an electric light plant that provided current from seven to ten every night. First Uncle at once ordered lights installed under Kiu Kung's supervision. We children followed him and the workmen around and if they had answered all our questions they would never have finished. When the current was turned on we ran wildly from room to room, switching the lights off and on until several switches were broken and had to be replaced.

About this time, also, we had a visit from one of the older members of our clan from the village of Ma To. In the eve-

ning he wanted to light his pipe, and took a spill of twisted paper from the case hanging on the wall and held it against the electric light bulb to ignite it. It did not light. He tried again, and looked at the spill in puzzlement.

I assumed my best little-girl-being-helpful-to-elders manner.

"You must hold it on the other side of the light," I informed him gravely.

This he did twice, regarding it with increasing puzzlement as it still failed to light.

Just then First Uncle came along.

"This newfangled contraption is no good," the old countryman told him testily. "Give me a light with fire where I can light my pipe."

In response to First Uncle's questions he told what had happened. First Uncle scolded me severely for being disrespectful to my elders, made me apologize, and sent me off to bed.

Next day Kiu Kung had me tell him about this and laughed till the tears came. It seemed to me that a Taoist was much more irresponsible but also much more human than a Confucianist. I knew that I had done wrong, but Kiu Kung didn't seem to care one way or the other.

In our free time we children would often get permission to play in the dragon-eye orchard, and one of our amusements was to hunt the birds that resorted there. I had no luck at this until later in the season we were visited by flocks of small birds, when I found it comparatively easy to hurl a stick into a flock so that one of them was knocked over when they rose in a cloud.

I carried my first victim proudly to show Kiu Kung, whose courtyard was close by.

"See, Kiu Kung, I have killed a bird," I told him triumphantly. "Look at it, it is quite dead."

He regarded me sadly. "It is not a good thing to kill a living

creature like that, especially for a girl," he told me solemnly.

"But we all have fighting crickets, Kiu Kung," I told him, "even you. And when the contest is over they are all dead but one. If crickets can be killed in sport, why not a bird."

"That is different," said he. "The Taoist philosophy of non-action is that each must follow his own nature. This takes its course spontaneously and without effort. It is what it is. The nature of a cricket is to fight. It is not the nature of a girl to kill."

"Is it your nature to be a vegetarian?" I asked him, "because if it is, your nature and mine must be different for I do not like to eat food without the flavor of meat."

"I am a vegetarian because I am a Taoist," he said, "and also because of my respect for the Buddhist belief that the beast or bird or insect may be a human soul in another life, another incarnation as they call it."

Indeed our household had something of this idea. We ate little meat except pork, never ate beef, and on the first and sixteenth of each month abstained entirely from meat. But our attitude was rather precautionary and negative. I did not understand all this and told Kiu Kung so.

"Then I will tell you a famous story that will give you the idea," said he. "The great Taoist philosopher Chwang Tzu once dreamed that he was a butterfly. He flew from flower to flower and had a wonderful time in the soft wind and the warm sunlight. Then he woke up and he was Chwang Tzu again. But he said to himself, 'A moment ago I was Chwang Tzu dreaming that he was a butterfly. Perchance I am now a butterfly dreaming that it is Chwang Tzu. How can I know which one is real and which is the dream.'"

"I do not like your story, Kiu Kung," I told him positively. "I am Ah Ling. I do not want to be a butterfly. I do not even want to dream about one. I don't like your philosopher."

In a way, though, I was really a Taoist like Kiu Kung, but without any philosophical trimmings, for Taoism represents an undercurrent in Chinese life that is in protest against the formalism and rigidity of Confucianism. This reaction is present to some extent in all Chinese, but crops out in individuals who make a break with society and thus gain their freedom. I was, without quite realizing it, resentful of my disabilities as a girl. This tendency toward revolt was strengthened by Kiu Kung's Taoist philosophy of irresponsibility and freedom.

About this time Kiu Kung began to take me along once in a while on his daily visits to our shops in the city.

Eventually we visited all seventeen of them with the exception of the coffin shop, which I resolutely refused to enter, for coffins were connected in my mind with my father's death. I made up for this by more frequent visits to the pastry and fruit shops. I liked to go, for up to this time my life had been almost entirely limited to our household, and although I had been to Java I knew almost nothing of Kan San.

My first visit was to our dye shop, which was in the same street. Everything was colored with great blue or red splotches, even the table, the chairs, and the walls. The workers' hands were either blue or red. The whole place had an awful smell. Especially the big room at the back, where there were four large vats with ladders leading from the ground to the top. I at once climbed up to where I could see the cloth in the blue solution. I tried to dip my fingers in to have them dyed but it was too deep for me to reach.

"Be careful, Miss Seven," called a workman. "You cannot get out if you fall in."

In the back courtyard were four tall wooden poles set in holes in four round stones, with numbers of bamboos making a parallel pattern on which lengths of cloth of different colors were hung to dry.

Emerging from all these bad odors, we crossed the street and came to our pawnshop. The entrance was a square door covered with sheet iron, in the middle of the high stone wall. Inside was a high counter with steel bars reaching to the ceiling. Here I saw Tung Tung Ko, the stalwart guard who had accompanied us as far as Amoy on our trip to Java. He came forward with a broad grin and bowed to me with exaggerated formality, and showed me around while Kiu Kung finished his business. The wife of the manager of the shop had been the slave girl of Sixth Brother, and had been married by grandmother to this young man a year before. She insisted on my coming in, and formally served tea to me while Kiu Kung was checking the accounts.

Kiu Kung now called me, so I said goodbye and followed him into the office. There I saw a man outside the small window who was seeking a loan on a package of cheap-looking hair ornaments.

"Ten dollars," said the clerk.

The man had a very pale face. I could tell that he was in deep sorrow. He begged earnestly for more money. His wife was sick and he needed fifteen dollars for doctor and medicine. He begged so hard that the clerk finally gave him twelve. He took the pawn ticket and the money, which was in the small-change currency issued by our pawnshop. He counted it twice and it made quite a pile. Then he looked at it with a long sigh that deeply stirred my heart.

I asked Kiu Kung about it when we went out. He said our pawnshop was popular and had a good reputation because our family had never believed in the high rates of interest other pawnshops demanded, and charged only two per cent a month. This made me feel much better.

Our fish market was across the city and we had to pass through streets that were only about eight feet wide, just enough for the passage of two sedan chairs. They were

crowded with men, but I saw very few women. Some carried heavy loads on their shoulders. Some carried bamboo baskets. I could not catch what they said except the calls of those carrying loads.

"*Lang, lang,*" they shouted, "give way, give way," or "*Pong, pong,* load coming, load coming."

Now came a sedan chair. "*Lang, lang,*" called the front chair bearer. As they passed I was almost crushed in the crowd and submerged in a heedless throng of adults. My right arm was squeezed between the legs of two men, but I dared not let go Kiu Kung's hand. After the sedan chair was gone, we were able to walk side by side again, and where the street widened out we passed a small tower for the incineration of paper with written or printed words on it, which was carefully collected and respectfully burned.

Soon I could smell the odor of fish and knew that our market was not far away. Presently we reached it. Here were a large number of people crowded into a big shed. Baskets of fish were everywhere. They had been caught at sea the previous day and brought by boat to our city overnight. Our market bought from the fishermen and resold to retailers. We walked down the center aisle. The shed had no walls. People were going in and out on all sides. At the far corner was a small office. First Brother was there paying out money to the fishermen. He nodded pleasantly to me. Kiu Kung brought me a bench. I stood on it and from there I could see our men busily working inside the crowd. Three steelyards were held by chains hanging down from the crossbeams. A fisherman hung his basket of fish on the hook to be weighed. A clerk moved the weight until it balanced, and called out the weight, and another clerk beside him wrote down the number on a ticket and handed it to the fisherman, who brought it to First Brother's desk for payment.

Other people came in with empty hands. They looked over

the loads that had been weighed and picked out what they wanted. These were dealers who rapidly bought the day's catch, and soon all the fish were gone except for two baskets. Other workers now came, cut, washed, and salted those that were left and spread them out to dry in the sun, to be later shipped to the interior.

Another time Kiu Kung took me across a bridge and into a courtyard with a building at the far end. Just inside was an upright slab of stone with characters on it. He led me over and read them aloud.

"That is the biography of your grandfather," he said. "It was erected by a committee of leading scholars, and recounts his progressive ideas and public benefactions. He was considered the first citizen of this city in his time."

Then he took me to a similar slab of stone on the other side, which had five large black characters.

"One without a heart of pity is not a man," he read slowly, and continued, "that is also in honor of your grandfather. Years ago the place in the stream where the bridge is now was notorious because of the number of girl babies drowned there by their parents. Your grandfather could not endure the thought of this and often spoke of doing something about it. At that time there were six shops belonging to our family on this land. Then five were burned, and he used this place to build an orphanage which is the building you see, so people brought their unwanted girl babies here instead of putting them to death. The taxes on sales of lumber and bricks in our city are assigned to their support."

"Then what happened to them?" I asked.

"After they were old enough the orphanage married them out," he replied. "And now people's minds have changed and they keep most of their girl babies instead of drowning them."

"Did they ever drown boy babies?" I inquired.

"No, only girls," he replied.

I walked soberly homeward by his side, thinking of all the girl babies whose lives had been saved.

"People's minds are changing, as I told you," he said after a while. "I remember how not so long ago your aunt and your first sister were kept inside their rooms like birds in a cage. You are a lucky girl. You are even going to go to school."

I went home with a thankful heart.

VI

Our Family School

I was almost eight and it was my first day of school. Early in the morning Orchid Blossom woke me up and helped me dress in a long blue gown printed with white butterflies. I put on a pair of red trousers and pink stockings, and she helped me button my shoes. Mother was busy combing the hair of her little slave girl.

"Don't disturb Fourth Sister so early in the morning," she said, turning her head to take a look at me. "I will comb your hair."

"Thank you, mother," I answered, but just then Fourth Sister's slave girl appeared outside of the bamboo screen.

"Is Miss Seven up yet?" she asked Orchid Blossom. "Miss Four is ready to fix her hair."

Orchid Blossom came in and reported to mother, and I went to Fourth Sister, who combed my hair and tied it with a red ribbon.

After breakfast, Kiu Kung came to take Sixth Sister and me to school. Each of us had a small satchel for books under her left arm, the trademark of a student, which made us feel incredibly learned. It was a momentous occasion. Grandmother was standing outside her door. We bowed to her one by one.

"Be good children, be polite to teacher, and obey what he says," she commanded. "No fighting or teasing each other, but

respect to the older and love to the younger. Anyone who does wrong will be punished."

"Yes, grandmother," we chorused, and bowed again.

Kiu Kung went ahead. We followed, hand in hand, through the reception hall, along a path, through two doors and into another courtyard with pots of orchids on stone tables. Its high wall was whitewashed, with a big red character "Fu" in the center, which stands for happiness and good fortune. We looked around us with curiosity, for this was quite an adventure; neither of us had ever entered this court, where the unmarried men and older boys of the family lived.

Across the court we passed through a hall and came to a large, cheerful room. This was the classroom. From it, doors opened into four rooms where the teacher and four of my brothers and Nung Nung, the tea boy, lived.

There was a picture of Confucius on the wall directly in front of us. We would be under his personal scrutiny. Two scrolls in large black characters hung on either side. Underneath was a square table for the teacher with two armchairs beside it.

We bowed to the teacher individually as we entered the room. There were no formalities. Kiu Kung merely led us to our desks, where we sat down and looked around us. Our scholastic careers had begun.

2

When the matter of our going to school had been first suggested to grandmother, she had been doubtful. "It wouldn't be fitting for the older girls to associate with all those big boys," she said judicially, "but perhaps it will be all right for Ah Ling. But it will not do to have just one girl along with those boys and men. There will have to be two together."

Indeed I scarcely knew three older brothers who were to be my schoolmates, as they had been sleeping in the school courtyard and taking their meals in the men's dining room for a number of years. In fact I did not much more than come to know them by sight during the three years we were in the same schoolroom, and about as far as we got was a speaking acquaintance, with a good deal of uncertainty and shyness on both sides.

When I learned of grandmother's decision I was excited and had at once run to Sixth Sister to ask her to go along with me, but I found her unenthusiastic. Her reluctance was understandable, for First Aunt, her mother, was quite illiterate and Sixth Sister had had no opportunity to get even the beginnings of book learning, whereas I had already made considerable progress.

Our teacher was an old man of about sixty, a famous scholar who had passed the old imperial civil service examinations and received the degree of Han Lin. He had been appointed to high positions but was not interested in official life and had not been a success at it. He had now returned, sick and old, to his native place. He had a pain in his back and could not straighten up, but walked in the form of a trapezoid, bent sharply from the waist forward and to the right, with a cane in his right hand to prevent him from toppling over, and his left hand to his back as if to hold himself together. He sat stiffly erect at his desk but could not keep it up very long and had to retire at intervals to his room and lie down. But he carried on indomitably and maintained high standards for himself and his pupils, retaining a simplicity and directness and a kindly sense of humor. He died three years later. With his death our school ended.

He had a long, narrow face with a pointed chin, prolonged by a bundle of scraggy white whiskers. He wore gold-rimmed

spectacles that were usually down at the very end of his long nose, and he habitually looked over them. His blue silk gown and black top jacket were very neat and clean. On his bald head he wore a round black silk skullcap decorated with a knob of red coral on top indicating his high scholastic degree.

He called us one by one to his desk in order of seniority. I was the youngest.

"Su Ling," he summoned in a low, soft voice.

This was my new school name and he was the first one to call me by it.

"Come and bring your textbook here."

"Yes, teacher, I am coming," I answered quickly and slid down from my desk and stood before him with a new feeling of assurance. I was now Su Ling.

3

When it had been decided that Sixth Sister and I might attend school, Second Brother had suggested to First Uncle that just as the boys had the generation name of San, we girls should also be provided with a generation name, as that was being done in many of the more modern families.

"Why can't we just use the same name?" I asked him.

This, however, was too much for even my progressive brother. "That would not do at all," he said. "It would do away with the differences between the sexes. You are what you are."

So First Uncle asked our teacher to decide on a name for the girls of our generation, at least those of us who went to school. He chose "Su" which in our dialect means virtue. Sixth Sister became Su Yu and I was Su Ling.

"That is a name to be proud of," Second Brother told me, for he sensed that I was still unhappy over not being allowed

to use the same generation name. "It means the bell that sounds forth virtue. You remember that in the Analects, Confucius was spoken of as an alarm bell to arouse people to righteousness."

This made me feel much better.

Up to this time, all the children but one in my generation had called me Chih Mei, Seventh Younger Sister. Now I was a student, with a new name and a new status, and such childish things must be put aside. It took some time for them to get out of the habit of calling me Chih Mei and change to Su Ling.

"Su Ling," said the teacher, "let me have your book."

I handed it to him and he put it on the edge of his desk where I stood facing him. He read a sentence and marked a red circle at the end of it and told me to look at the words and follow his tone. But the desk was too high for me. I stood on tiptoe and was just able to see. The first lesson he gave me was two sentences, but these contained twenty-four characters, of which nineteen were different from each other.

He went over it three times and I followed his tone, repeating it loudly.

"Now take your book to your own desk, read, and try to remember the words," he instructed me with gravity.

I returned to my desk and looked around to see what the others were doing. All were wagging their heads from side to side and shouting their lessons in a loud voice. I felt very shy about joining in. My sister seemed to understand.

"Su Ling, shall we read together?" she asked politely, using my new school name.

I was much relieved. "Certainly, we have the same lesson."

"One, two, three, start," ordered Su Yu, and I joined in.

Our lesson was from the Three Character Classic. Each line contains three words, and is rhymed so as to be easy for chil-

dren to memorize. It consists of the Confucian philosophy of life and education. It begins with the famous dictum of the philosopher Mencius that the nature of man is originally good. Our teacher never explained it either to me or Su Yu. It was sufficient for us to memorize it without knowing its meaning. But we heard him explain it to the older students, and we repeated it very loudly over and over until we remembered it.

Fifth Brother studied a deeper textbook and had to memorize longer lessons. He worked hard but was troubled by the noise about him. He would try to keep from hearing the others by putting his fingers into his ears, and then would give up and try to concentrate by shouting loud enough to drown out all other sounds. This struck me as an excellent idea. I began to imitate him and in time developed a devastating treble that soared high above the assorted noises of the room and enabled me to more than hold my own. It convinced teacher that I was really putting my soul into it.

Third Brother was the oldest student of all and sat where I could see him, so I watched his method in calligraphy, memorizing, or writing essays, and imitated him. He was the best scholar in our family and had an unusual memory, which he supplemented with hard work. Every day he practiced writing, for which he used a table lightly covered with sand on which he wrote in great sweeps with a wooden stylus.

He did not talk very much and was very proper and honest. He was grandmother's favorite grandson and had been much devoted to our father.

He was always considerate of me, as he was my own brother, and I in turn treated him with respect and obedience. If I had been a boy he would have had a feeling of responsibility for me as his little brother, but my being both a girl and a fellow student put him in a dilemma, particularly as he was now too old to have much association with girls. Although he

was my own brother, I liked Sixth Brother much better. For one thing Third was six years older than I, and as he had been living with the men, I had seen little of him. For another he was too much the big man as compared with us younger children, and too much the star student.

Su Yu and I enjoyed penmanship very much. We went together to teacher to ask leave to get water. For this I had a small porcelain container in the form of a cock which I filled with water from the waterpot in the courtyard. I dripped the water from the beak of the cock onto the ink slab and carefully rubbed the ink cake on it. It seemed too dry, so I added water and ground it again. I took off the cap from the brush and wet it with the ink and wrote the characters with the tip of the brush. The first morning I wrote three pages, thirty-six characters, and took it to the teacher's desk as the other students did.

At noon teacher dismissed us for lunch. First, as always, we went to grandmother's room to pay our respects and report our return.

"Grandmother! We are back from school," we said together.

She took one amused look at me. "My dear Ah Ling," she exclaimed, "come and look in the mirror," and led me to her dressing table. It was terrible. The black ink was on my forehead, right cheek, mouth and chin, and both hands were covered. She called Orchid Blossom, who was outside the door waiting for me, and she helped me to wash off the worst.

I went to where mother was reading poetry. "Mother! I am back," I reported.

She raised her head and looked at me. I could see that she felt badly. "I am ashamed of your dirty face and dirty dress," she said. "A girl must always keep clean and neat no matter what she is doing."

After lunch everybody had to go back to school immediately. I remembered that I had to change to shoes that would help

me to gain altitude so I need not stand on tiptoe when called to the teacher's desk. I ran to my room and opened my shoe case quickly and picked the pair with wooden soles that made me about an inch higher than the ones I wore that morning. "Knack, knack," they sounded as I walked over to say goodbye to mother.

"You silly child," she said. "Here it is a sunny day and you wear rain shoes. For what purpose?"

I explained, and she reported to grandmother, who ordered her slave girl to bring a wooden stool to school and to tell teacher about it.

School started again and the air filled with voices. About the middle of the afternoon teacher called us one by one to his desk. I was the last.

"Now give me your book and recite," he said, taking the book from my hand. "Turn your back," he ordered.

Everybody was getting tired and the room was growing quieter and, as I started to repeat what I had memorized, I felt that they were all looking at me. The teacher tapped on his desk with his knuckles, which was the signal for studying out loud.

"Study. Everybody study," he commanded.

The noise began again. I repeated my lesson loudly and rapidly. This is called "backing the book." I was fortunate, in that I remembered those eight lines very well and ran them off as if they were a single sentence. Sometimes one of us failed to remember. Then teacher would keep him after school until he had it perfect.

"Now stand on this," he said when I had finished, and pushed my stool forward with his foot and gave me a new lesson. I bowed and returned to my seat and began to repeat my new lesson just as loudly as anyone else. I felt that I belonged.

Su Yu did not fare so well. She was unaccustomed to this

sort of thing and found it hard to memorize her lesson, which made her repeat herself and hesitate. When she did this she became acutely self-conscious, which was not lessened by the fact that all the boys stopped studying and stared at her. Also her interest in memorizing meaningless sounds or in writing characters that were likewise without meaning to her was not sufficient to overcome the long hours of monotony and discomfort in the confinement of the schoolroom.

After the first couple of days she declared she had had enough, but grandmother insisted on her trying a little longer. But it was no use, and grandmother finally gave her permission to drop out and for me to continue alone.

This was a disappointment but did not decrease my ambition to become a student like Third Brother and the ancestors grandmother so often told us about. It did, however, tend to separate Sixth and me. My new interests made it impossible for us to share everything as we had done before, even if I had had the time.

4

Neither our teacher's age and illness nor the respect in which he was held was sufficient to restrain his pupils from trying all the standard pranks. They put stones in front of the door for him to stumble over, or spread paste and watched hopefully for him to slip. But he was too wary for them and they were always doomed to disappointment. Perhaps it was merely that he had learned to watch his step as he shuffled slowly about. It may be that he remembered that he had been a boy himself. However, when he mistook the paste for spilled gravy and scolded the tea boy for it, they had the satisfaction of feeling they had at least discovered one trick he did not know. That was as near as they came to putting anything over

on him, although they did on a number of occasions succeed in setting the clock ahead without his discovering it, and thus getting dismissed early.

But teacher had his innings. Some of the students were always making a disturbance: neglecting lessons, whispering, playing tricks on each other. The penalty was to be smacked on the palm of the hand with a bamboo ruler. He was highly respected for his efficiency in this.

Sixth Brother was a good student and finished his work quickly. This gave him time for mischief. When in doubt, teacher punished him. It would go something like this:

When the dust settled after some shenanigans, teacher would address Sixth Brother. "I suppose it was you," he would say mildly.

"It is always I," Sixth would reply plaintively.

Then the rest of us, especially the real perpetrators, would watch blandly while Sixth got smacked again. On such occasions we would see him put his hands behind his back and rub them together vigorously.

"What on earth do you do that for?" I asked him once.

"I have invented a system," he grinned. "The massage toughens my hands. I have gotten so that I hardly feel it."

In the spring all of us had fighting crickets. They were kept in a bamboo tube with the ends plugged and slits cut in it to give the cricket air. When the contest began, two tubes were put together end to end with the plugs removed, and the crickets fought it out until one emerged as champion, having destroyed all of the others. Sixth Brother was interested in all insects and was later a biology major in college. He usually managed to have the champion, which he carefully nourished on cucumber flowers. He would carry it around with him everywhere although it was strictly forbidden to bring it to school. This worked all right as long as the cricket was quiet,

but when it began to sound off, the teacher would call Sixth Brother up and demand his pet, which always resulted in a tug-of-war, with teacher at one end of the bamboo and Sixth Brother at the other. Teacher always won.

Later in the season Sixth had an unerring eye for cicadas. He would spot them in the trees in the dragon-eye orchard. Then he would climb the tree and capture the insect. He carried them around in his pocket carefully wrapped in his handkerchief. Occasionally one would work loose and emit a "whang" which could be heard above the loudest shouting of the lessons of our entire student body.

This our teacher considered the ultimate outrage. On one occasion he lost his patience with Sixth Brother and it was the only time we ever saw him really exasperated.

"These insects have utterly no place in the classroom," he said acidly. "Knowledge is to be found in books and not in childish things of this sort. The superior man seeks to master the knowledge handed down by the ancients and guides his life accordingly."

Ours was a strictly classical curriculum with the emphasis on memorizing, artistic calligraphy, and the writing of essays and poems, which however were composed largely of classic phraseology and allusions.

Once a week an outside teacher came to instruct the boys in Chinese boxing, a combination of calisthenics and self-defense, and Sixth Sister and I, to our delight, were allowed to have lessons in sword dancing.

Nung Nung, the tea boy, was one of the great assets of our school. His work was to clean the classroom and the rooms of teacher and students, and to be their personal servant, particularly in providing tea and hot water. All day long it was Nung Nung this and Nung Nung that. But no matter how busy he might be he was always prompt and cheerful. When they called him he would answer, *"Hoh,"* and come at once. He

laughed often and had a trick of throwing his head back and his stomach out when he did so. All of us liked him.

He had an adjoining room where he could wait until called for. However, he preferred to stand in the classroom, where he listened intently to everything that went on. He particularly liked to pick up big words, which he would use to the amusement of the students. In this way he acquired a considerable smattering of education. Sometimes in his zeal not to miss anything he would go to sleep leaning against the wall and snore gently. On one such occasion Sixth Brother twisted up a piece of paper and slyly inserted it into Nung Nung's nose. He sneezed violently and came awake in a hurry. Teacher looked around to see what was the matter but Sixth Brother went on innocently to get water for his ink slab. He considered this one of his major exploits.

I am afraid that teacher had his misgivings about having me in his school. Being a girl, I could not be touched for punishment, as could the boys, for the Confucian rules of decorum are very strict. He could not even keep me after school, as there might be no one else present.

I soon learned that I could go free for things for which the boys were severely punished. This went a long way to make up for the disabilities of being a girl, but I was careful not to take undue advantage of it even when Sixth Brother once urged me to keep his cicadas in the drawer of my desk saying that teacher wouldn't punish me whereas he had already been smacked twice that day.

5

On the birthday of Confucius our teacher took all the boys to pay their respects to the tablet of the sage in the Confucian temple.

Chinese religion is specialized. Only the Emperor could

worship Heaven. Only their own descendants may worship ancestors. Only scholars of recognized standing may worship Confucius. For them this is the great holiday of the year.

But teacher did not include me. "Su Ling, you may go home. No school for you today," he ordered.

I dared not disobey so I came home and went straight to my grandmother's room as always to report that I was back. Kiu Kung was there too. I told her how our teacher had gone off with the boys and sent me home. I was aggrieved.

"Am I not a student also?" I demanded passionately. "Do I not study the classics just the same as the boys? Why should I be shut out just because I am a girl?"

"If Su Ling can go to school, she can go to the Confucian temple," said my grandmother.

Kiu Kung looked scandalized.

"At least to look on," said grandmother slyly.

"Well, perhaps," began Kiu Kung.

"Goody, goody," I interrupted him, forgetting my manners and hopping up and down. "Hurry, hurry."

Kiu Kung grinned. "Come along, then," he said, "and stop jumping up and down like a little girl and try to act like a dignified daughter of Confucius." And out we went together and hurried through the crowded streets. Soon I could see the high yellow walls of the Confucian temple. We passed through a wide gateway with a stone lion on each side, crossed an arched bridge, and entered the inner courtyard. On a square table at its center were a pig's head, a cow's head, and several kinds of fruit as offerings. These heads represented the entire animal. In a hall at one side a band of ten musicians played ancient instruments, and here my teacher and fellow students stood in line, waiting their turn along with officials and students from other schools.

Kiu Kung led me around to a side door. "You may stand here and look in," he said.

I looked through the door into the main shrine, far larger and higher than our reception hall at home. I had not known that a room could be so huge. On one side was a great stone tablet on the back of a stone turtle, with candles and incense smoking before it. Otherwise the hall was gloomy and empty and bare.

Soon our school marched in. Our teacher first made his bow and then summoned my fellow students one by one, beginning with the eldest and ending with the littlest. They seemed tiny and insignificant in the empty gloom, and somehow remote and unreal. Or was it I, looking on from my forlorn doorway, that was insignificant and unreal? I was like one that stood far off.

It was now Kiu Kung's turn to go in and make his bow. "You do not follow," he warned. "Wait for me here."

I was left desolate. I had a sense of complete nothingness, like a quotation from the classics that teacher was unable to explain so that I could understand it, and a feeling of loneliness of a sort that I had not known before.

That afternoon there was a celebration in our school. A compass needle was set in the center of a table and Kiu Kung set out a lot of clay figures in a circle around it. Each had a chance to spin the needle once.

Finally there were only two dolls left. One was a man riding on a horse, whom we called Chang Yuan. He was everybody's favorite and symbolized the one who took first place in the imperial examinations for the highest degree. It was now my turn. I could not reach the needle, so I climbed up and stood on a chair. I tapped the needle gently with my forefinger and prayed in my heart, "Chang Yuan, come to me." The needle stopped gently at the head of the horse. This made up in part

for my exclusion from the ceremony in the Confucian temple.

The next year I was included on the same basis as the other students, and a few years later a new regulation decreed equal status for all students regardless of sex.

6

I was something of a spoiled brat at this period, which was perhaps inevitable for the youngest daughter in a household the size of ours. My hair was combed so that it flared out on each side of my head. I had two slightly protruding teeth that my seniors declared gave a somewhat impish aspect to what I thought of as a friendly grin.

I was usually poised between audacity and flight, teasing my contemporaries and being as pert to my elders as I thought circumstances would permit, and ready to flee to avoid retaliation or punishment. I was still known as Dan Da, and my loving family insisted that my gall had grown faster than the rest of me. I had long ago lost my fear of our old midwife.

We children all had to conform to the relationships between juniors and seniors as prescribed by Confucianism. When a dispute reached a certain point the elder would pull a long face of stern authority and lay down the law.

"I am your senior. You have to do what I say."

A junior who still disagreed would appeal to cook or a parent or even grandmother. Their answer was usually the same.

"He is your elder. You better obey."

This was particularly hard on me, with thirteen older and only one younger. It developed me into a specialist in getting my own way.

Sixth Brother was less amenable to the system—it is even possible that I was too—and although he was my favorite

brother, we used to fight. I hunted for colored pebbles in the orchard, which I treasured. He would steal them. He pulled my hair and I scratched his face and we mutually pummeled and kicked each other.

I had an insatiable curiosity about everything, and was industrious and indefatigable in satisfying it. There were now a larger number of things I could not find out for myself, so I was constantly asking the question, "Why?"

"You keep it up like the ricebird in spring," my mother used to complain: "Why-why-why-why, why-why-why-why."

I wanted to do as I pleased, which was perhaps a reaction against having to be respectful and obedient to so many of my seniors. A command had to be obeyed, but I developed the habit of saying "No" to all suggestions. In this I was a true Chinese, for my people have a genius for not doing what they do not want to do.

The fact that I was now a student gave me a special status. I was still a child, but was on the way to becoming a scholar. This enhanced my standing, particularly with grandmother, who could not read at all, and tended gradually to bring me into family councils, of which I was by no means reluctant to take advantage. It was equivalent to adding several years to my age.

During this time I had trouble with my knees, which would give way so I couldn't stand up. We blamed this on my being carried too much and too long on Orchid Blossom's back. Once I was in bed for two weeks. Mother gave me half a teaspoon of powdered pearls, my first dose, and grandmother called in a Taoist priest, who burned incense and chanted spells in the reception hall. We could hear him all over the house. At length he entered my room, a tall, thin man in a red gown, with a wide brass circlet across his forehead to hold back his long hair, and wild eyes in a cadaverous face. His right hand

held a long staff with a crook. His left made a series of magic gestures. His lips muttered rapidly.

Suddenly he gave a shout and struck me across the knees with the staff to drive out the demon of sickness. I screamed and began to weep, although it did not hurt much through the thick quilt over me.

I got well.

PART THREE

We Become Christians

As Buddhism *came to China in the first century and opened new spiritual horizons, Christianity has in our time brought a new dynamic to enable us better to fulfill our ancient destiny and yet take our place in the modern world. We remain inevitably, and even stubbornly, Chinese, but profit in our own fashion by Christianity.*

I

New Influences and Old Superstitions

FOUR YEARS after my father's death, when I was eleven, grandmother became a Christian and ordered all the members of the family to be baptized in the same church on the same day, except my two uncles, who were away from home. Most of us were very willing. None opposed.

For myself I had gained a deep impression as a child of the presence of unseen spirits from our family ancestor worship and had always imagined an old man just like my grandfather sitting in the cabinet in which the ancestral tablets were kept. Even though, as a girl, I stood at one side and was not allowed to have a part in the worship, I silently paid my greatest respect to him, and had a strange feeling of awe and reverence.

From the ghost stories that the slave girls were always telling, I came to feel that these ugly creatures were everywhere. Then there were my mother's often repeated stories, such as the one about the incendiary demon to whom her family had actually built a temple where they still worshiped regularly; and one about a missing child who was discovered in the company of a female demon by a slave girl who promptly went into hysterics; and another of a demon that changed into a small dog with shiny black hair that brushed past mother as it fled, with a body cold as ice. And she told of any number of

strange doings in the kitchen, like rice in the cooking pot turning into garbage.

I came to feel that spirits were workers of evil who acted as tyrants and sent down calamities on us human beings. I hated them but felt there was no human power that could control them, and hoped some superhuman strength would come some day and destroy them. This fear and this hope were always in my mind till I was fourteen. To me, Christianity was a sign of that hope.

I had also had one previous contact with the church which was one of my cherished memories. During the holiday season just before my father's death, someone gave him two tickets for the Christmas exercises in the church, and for some reason I don't remember, probably mere curiosity, he decided to go, and took me along. When we got to the church I was afraid of so many strangers, for I had never been in a crowd like this, but I had a feeling of security in being with my father. I was happy and proud to be sitting beside him in a way that had never happened before. I had little idea of what it was all about and when I asked my father afterward I found that he didn't either. But I was thrilled by the music and wished it would never stop. The preaching meant nothing to me, but the words *li-pai-tang,* which mean "hall of worship," or "church," stuck in my mind. I never forgot that the only time I went out anywhere with my father was to church, and the two were always connected in my mind. I had always wanted to go to that church again, but had never had an opportunity.

2

There were a number of influences that led grandmother to become a Christian. My father was her favorite son and his death caused her great sorrow, particularly on top of the death

of grandfather, who had died several years before my father. She often spoke of grandfather's good works and his gifts to charity that she felt should have resulted in the accumulation of sufficient merit to prevent, or at least delay, the untimely deaths of my father, who had died at twenty-nine, my fourth uncle who had died at seventeen, and grandfather himself. It seemed to her that all his good deeds had brought no result.

Furthermore, she had participated in the most strict observance of all of the ancient rites of ancestor worship at each of these deaths, but this had not seemed to help, either, and brought little of consolation and hope to her in her personal sorrow, as they aimed chiefly to provide for the welfare of the departed and for his continued relationship to the clan, and to ward off malignant influences.

During these years a Bible woman came several times and all of us listened with the greatest interest as she read passages of scripture and told of a future life. From her sympathy and words of consolation, grandmother, and mother as well, got a comfort that they had failed to find elsewhere. They came to turn to this more and more.

Then there was a man who returned from Java and was attacked by bandits and robbed of the savings of a lifetime. One of our tenant farmers told us of him and asked us to help, so grandmother invited him and his wife to stay with us until he could establish a practice, as he was a doctor. They were active Christians, and their trust in God in spite of their misfortunes impressed us very much. We had many talks about religion, and it was due to them that grandmother became a Christian and joined the church.

This did not make much change in our life at first. We never again sent representatives of our branch to worship with all the others at the annual ceremony at the great central ancestral temple of the whole clan at Ma To. Nor did we

afterward conduct any service of worship at our ancestral tombs, lest we lose face with the church. We did, however, go each year at the proper time to see that the tombs were in scrupulous repair, and this gradually took the form of an excursion and picnic that became very popular with the younger generation. We continued, however, to worship our ancestors in our home, as grandmother felt that it was not right for us to cease remembering them.

We did not do this ostentatiously but kept it to a minimum so that the church members would not think we were being dishonest. We gradually discontinued other non-Christian practices. The first image to be thrown away was that of Kwan Ti, the God of War, which had some relation to the fact that grandfather had held the highest military degree. Then the ladies took down the beautiful images of Kwan Yin in their rooms.

The church took no chances in all this, but sent a Bible woman to remove the images. Mother hid her Kwan Yin, and got it out afterward and continued her devotions as before. Grandmother knew this perfectly well but said nothing. Later, mother was given a Bible and became so interested that she read it more than she did her beloved poetry.

The last to go was the kitchen god. Cook did not like this at all, and finally complied only on grandmother's express order. To make sure of a clean sweep of it, not only was the shrine taken down from its place over the big brick kitchen range, but the wall was cleaned and newly whitewashed. She also discontinued the offerings of candles, incense, paper money, and food at the appointed times to the various spirits of the household, such as those of the well and gate. Cook was very doubtful about this last.

"How can we be sure that evil spirits will not walk right in, if the door god is not there to prevent them?" she asked anxiously.

Grandmother had her own technique. On new year's day she would open a Bible, put a finger on the page at random, and have me read the verse indicated. This she took as her motto for the year.

3

We soon had opportunity to demonstrate the sincerity of our new faith, for we had to meet the violent criticism and slander in which all our relatives and friends indulged freely, in their antagonism to this new move of ours.

"The men of the family are away," they said, "and there is no one to control the women. They used to stay behind the bamboo curtain but now they go on the streets alone."

This was because we went to church, and it must be borne in mind that there was some justification for their point of view, for women of families like ours went out very seldom and then only in closed sedan chairs. Thus, although my mother's parents' house was only a very short distance from our front gate, none of us women and girls had ever thought of walking. Indeed, we went to church at first in sedan chairs, but this soon proved too expensive for so many of us every Sunday.

Another of the criticisms was that men and women both attended the same service and that women spoke to men outside their own families. At that time and for people like us this was, of course, highly unconventional, although men and women sat on opposite sides of the church.

All this gossip and slander came back to us in exaggerated form. But my grandmother was as always a strong-minded woman and persevered with good courage in spite of all difficulties. We continued to go to church every Sunday. Walking through the streets was an ordeal, for we always met people we knew, and all of them looked at us in the greatest astonish-

ment and stared unmercifully. We would lower our eyes and hurry past, blushing down to our necks. This at length became unbearable, so we got up at cockcrow, walked to church in the early dawn, and thus avoided meeting any of our relatives. There was a shed on the high-school grounds, next door, and in this we hid until the church doors were open and we could enter.

Our cousins in the other branches of our clan gibed at us children at every opportunity.

"You better watch out. Those foreign devils in the Christian church steal children's eyes to make medicine. You'll lose yours if you aren't careful."

But grandmother said this was simply ignorant and malicious nonsense, and later on our relatives realized that what we had done was all right and stopped their unfavorable criticism.

I loved the church, which was one of the few places where I was taken to visit friends. I liked to meet the other children. I enjoyed Sunday school and my teacher, Miss Ling, a young lady with a keen mind and a charming personality. She told us stories, and taught us songs. She told us about God, God as Creator, God as Love. But in my thoughts she held first place. I was impressed by what she taught us about God, but I had no special feeling about him. To my childish mind, he was the oldest relative of the church who came to visit it once a week, just as my ancestor came to visit our family when we opened the cabinet of ancestral tablets in the reception hall and bowed down in worship.

I learned how to pray. But my prayers were according to my own ideas. I needed nothing. But I hated the dark. Therefore I made a prayer like this: "God! Please take away the darkness from me and keep the sunshine going on forever and ever. Amen." I kept up this same prayer for many nights but it was

never answered. Finally I got tired and stopped. I did not pray again during my childhood years.

But I still thank my Sunday school teacher for teaching me the song "God takes care." The words seemed meant for me. "In the night when you're asleep, no fear of dark is there. God is near when you sleep. God takes care." Before that, Orchid Blossom had always sat beside me when I went to bed and told me stories or sung and never left me until I was asleep. When I woke during the night, I had always felt that ugly, hateful creatures were crowded about my bed. My only protection was to close my eyes tightly and hide my head under the covers, calling my mother if I became too frightened. After I learned this song, I sang it every night before I slept. Every time after singing it I felt that God was just like a human person sitting beside me, and I became more brave and strong and got to sleep peacefully. I did not realize then that this was indeed praying. I needed Orchid Blossom no more to be my company nor did I wake my mother again at midnight.

I am not sure that we were really good Christians. As for myself, I simply adopted such aspects of Christianity as I liked or felt I needed.

At this time one of our neighbors became possessed by an evil spirit and kept on leaping high into the air, laughing, crying, and talking to himself without eating or sleeping for many days and nights, but was still well and strong as usual. After a week he became worse and jumped down from the roof, so he was locked in a room by his family. Finally, as nothing seemed to help him, they invited a Christian of strong faith, a Mr. Ho, who had been a minister for many years, to come to heal him.

He came with a Bible in his hand, and when he entered the patient's room the man hid under the bed. Mr. Ho asked him to come out and talk.

"You are too big and tall," the voice from under the bed replied, "I dare not talk with you unless you put down what is in your hand."

Mr. Ho put his Bible on the table and the man came out.

"You are really not as tall and strong as I am," he said, "but that book makes you stronger and taller."

Mr. Ho took the man's left hand to feel his pulse, and began to pray. Finally the man began to shake and cold sweat poured out over his whole body. The demon was out of him. He was weak and tired. Soon he dropped into a deep sleep from which he awoke cured. Later he and his family became Christians.

From this I felt that prayer gives authority to the Christian. The Bible became meaningful to me, not only as a story book, ancient history, or a book of beautiful poems, but as a holy book of God's word.

4

But our troubles in becoming Christians were not over. When the next season for worship at our central ancestral temple at Ma To came around and our branch was not represented, we received a call from Fourth Elder Granduncle, Sze Pa Kung, the head of our clan.

In the absence of the men of our family, grandmother received him in the reception hall. We children peeked through the cat hole and around the corners. He was stylishly dressed just as at Second Sister's wedding, smoked a long pipe, and did not smile once. His long, lean face seemed to me even more overbearing and cruel than I had remembered, with the small pointed beard that stuck straight out so truculently. He spoke quietly, but with a curt authority, and soon finished what he had to disclose. Grandmother merely stared at him, and for the only time in my knowledge of her, found nothing

to say. When she made no reply, he arose, they bowed formally to each other, and she made a sign to a servant to escort him to the gate.

Then, placing her hands on the shoulders of her two slave girls, she proceeded slowly to her own room. More slowly than usual, as it seemed to me. She sat down heavily in her big chair, and drank some tea a slave girl poured for her. She said no word to anyone and seemed lost in thought. No one dared to ask what had happened.

After a long time she roused herself and told a slave girl to summon my mother and my two aunts. When they had come and were seated she made her report.

"Our honorable clan head," she said quietly, "has just notified me that since we have joined the Christian church and no longer worship at the ancestral temple at Ma To, we will be cut off from receiving the annual grant in connection with grandfather's degree, and also from the large fund allocated in rotation to the thirty-one branches which it is our turn to receive this year. This will be a heavy loss."

There was a murmur of astonishment and dismay from my mother and aunts and from us children standing wide-eyed and unnoticed in the doorway.

This special fund was the income from lands owned by the clan as a whole, and year by year granted in turn to each branch. We later estimated that it would be sufficient for the support of our household of fifty-one persons for two years. It consisted of rice, which could be stored and used for a long time. The annual grant amounted to over half of our living costs.

"I have been reckoning up," continued my grandmother imperturbably. "We are still considerably in debt from the illness and funeral expenses of my second son. We have bought some new property on which payments are due, and

the shop at Hong Kong lost money last year. We will have enough for food, but nothing more. We have been counting heavily on these funds." She paused and looked from one to the other. "I would like your suggestions," she concluded.

"I can sell my jewels," said my mother in her gentle voice.

"I guess that we can take care of our part of the family," said Third Aunt.

First Aunt merely looked dubious, for she knew that First Uncle always had turned everything over to grandmother and had no reserve funds of his own.

No other plan was forthcoming and grandmother dismissed us.

Indignation mounted as the news spread through the household.

"He has no legal right to cut us off," said Second Brother, who was a student in the college of law, when he returned a few days later. "We must tell him so."

But when that was put up to our elders, it was vetoed.

"He would consider it most disrespectful of us to try to argue with him," said my grandmother. "It would only make things worse."

And this was the final verdict. The clan is far from being the democracy it is generally pictured to be by outsiders.

So we became "rice-Christians" in reverse. We were able to increase the income from our shops, but had to practice strict economy. Until I finished college, all tuition, books, clothes, and incidentals for Third Brother and me were financed by the sale of my mother's pearls from time to time. It was fortunate that she came from a wealthy family and had an unusually large dowry.

5

For several years after the death of my father, mother lived

as if she expected any time to receive a summons from his spirit to join him in the other world. When the women of our clan stood in a disconsolate row in our coarse white mourning garments to wail on the prescribed anniversaries, the burden of her utterance was always and endlessly the same.

"If your spirit is now present and can hear me, only summon me, and I will go to be with you."

But there was no reply.

The Chinese mind is so deeply impressed by the stability of family ties that even death is not considered as separating the ancestors from their descendants. Hence the common belief that the dead watch over the welfare of the living. So it is natural in times of stress to try to get into touch with the departed and seek their advice.

There is a class of people, chiefly women, who act as mediums between the dead and living. Such persons are found in nearly every village, even today, and are known as *sien po,* or witches.

My mother often expressed the desire to hear my father's voice and have his advice. But at first she was too stunned by grief to take any initiative, and later as grandmother became interested in Christianity she came to frown more and more upon everything of this sort, and mother did not dare to risk her displeasure.

Chinese are accustomed to being Confucianists, Taoists, and Buddhists at the same time, so mother, who was a sincere Christian, saw nothing incongruous in consulting a witch. She found herself caught by the old religion and not really understanding the new. In many ways this was the conflict of my country, not only spiritually but politically. It was only gradually that we came to understand the exclusive nature of Christianity and that it constituted an integrated and consistent system of faith and action.

But after we became Christians and joined the church, she

became more and more worried. Father was not a Christian. Perhaps they would be separated in the next world. She could not bear the thought of it.

But this was not the worst. The Buddhist belief was that those who did not have descendants to worship and to make offerings of food at their tombs would become hungry ghosts and wander, unhappy and distressed, through the darkness of limbo forever, and this had become the general belief of the Chinese people. Since we had so largely discontinued ancestor worship on becoming Christians, the thought of her beloved husband becoming a hungry ghost preyed constantly upon her mind until in her desperation she resolved to brave grandmother's displeasure and get in touch with him at all costs.

There was a witch in our city who had a great reputation for getting clear responses from the departed, and my mother decided to consult her during a visit to her own mother's home.

When I heard my mother talking with my maternal grandmother about going to consult the *sien po,* I immediately asked to go along. They would not hear of this at first, but I pointed out that if mother's slave girl, Wood Orchid, could go with her I could too. So they finally gave in.

We went by sedan chair to a village that was really a suburb of our city. We alighted at a gate and entered a long, narrow hall that led us through a cluster of houses and had many turns. It was very dark and I saw Wood Orchid, who walked just ahead of me, look apprehensively back over her shoulder. We finally came to a large and gloomy room with only the one door by which we entered. There were no windows and the only light came through the roof, where several tiles had been replaced by glass. No sound penetrated to this room. It was quiet as the grave.

The *sien po* was waiting for us here. When my eyes became accustomed to the gloom I saw that she was very thin and pale

and more like a ghost herself. Her hair was not well combed, her hairknot hung down her back, and she had a generally disorderly appearance. Her eyes seemed to be fixed on something in the far distance. She took no notice of us, but continued to smoke the water pipe that stood before her on the table. I noticed it was an unusually beautiful one. After we had waited for some minutes she focused her eyes on me.

"I see you have brought one of your relatives with you," she said in a monotonous, husky whisper.

My mother bowed apologetically. "My daughter," she replied. "I hope you will permit her to remain."

These witches are very particular as to who is admitted to their presence. No men, and especially no scholars, are allowed. This is probably because they are conscious that they must depend to a considerable extent upon the ignorance and credulity of those who come to them.

However, she said nothing in reply and I stayed. After another interval she went to a seat behind a table just in front of a glass cabinet holding a number of spirit-tablets. This would indicate that we were in the ancestral temple of the clan to which she belonged. There were no seats for us and we remained standing.

At each end of the table was an incense burner. Wood Orchid now stepped forward, stuck some incense sticks in each and lit them, and spirals of smoke began to curl slowly through the thick air to the rafters. No other preparations were required. There was no sacrifice to be offered.

The *sien po* continued absently to smoke her water pipe at intervals, and then took a drink of tea. As she started to put the cup back on the table, she was seized with a sudden convulsive movement, the cup fell with a crash and broke, and the tea splashed over the stone floor. To all this the *sien po* was apparently oblivious, but I noticed that her beautiful water

pipe slipped through her fingers so that it came gently to rest on the floor beside her. I glanced at the others. Mother was on the other side and had her eyes fixed on the *sien po* in anxious concentration, so she did not notice this.

The witch now placed her arms on the table before her and let her head fall forward upon them. For a quarter of an hour she remained thus with her head down, making no sound and without motion. Then she gradually straightened up and began in low and measured tones to mutter the following incantation:

Three sisters
Four sisters
Lead me to the dark place.

What will you do in the dark place?
I want to seek for my relatives.
When I find them may I
Ask one word.

Then lead me back
Quickly.
To the light.

This incantation she repeated three times, accenting the rhythm more and more each time. After the fourth time a sudden change seemed to come over her. First she shivered. Then her whole body shook and began to twitch. Cold sweat covered her face and temples. She began to sway gently from side to side and seemed fast asleep.

My mother broke the silence. "What do you see?" she asked.

"I see nothing. It is all dark and chilly," answered the witch and continued to rock gently from side to side.

After a while my mother spoke again. "What do you see now?" she inquired anxiously.

"I see a pagoda," the witch replied, "and a house with a big watchtower."

"Do you see any human being?" asked my mother.

"Yes, I see men and women of pale, sallow complexion. Ah, here is a man who comes toward me to speak to me."

My mother leaned forward eagerly. "How is that man dressed?" she asked.

Here the witch gave a general description of his costume and appearance. My mother shook her head in disappointment.

"It is not he," she said.

There was another pause. Then the witch said that more men were approaching and began to describe them. But none appeared to be my father. My mother was close to tears.

"Here comes another man with two companions," said the witch after an interval of silence. "He is younger and slender. He has the air of a businessman or a scholar, and is dressed more like an official."

My mother leaned forward again. "Has he any distinguishing mark on his face?" she asked breathlessly.

"Yes, I can see something on the left side of his face."

"Do you mean right or left side?" asked my mother.

"Ah, he turns his head so I can see more clearly. It is a dark spot on the right side."

My mother let out her breath in a long sigh. But this did not seem at all convincing to me and I started to say so, but mother hushed me peremptorily.

"It is he," she said in an awed whisper. "It is he! Tell me," she said, raising her voice, "do you summon me to come to you in the spirit world?"

There was a momentary pause, and then a low, unnatural

voice seemed to speak from above us. "We must think of our children," it said. "They need your care and training."

"But you," she said anxiously, "are you all right?"

"You need not worry, I am all right," said the voice.

"But I have been so afraid that we were neglecting your offerings and that you might become a hungry ghost. Tell me, do you have everything you need?"

"I have been adopted by a general who supplies me with everything I desire, so let your heart be at peace."

"What is the general's name?" asked my mother.

There was a pause.

"The spirit has gone," said the witch at length, and again rested her head on her arms and was quiet for a long time. Then her body began again to tremble and her limbs twitched and she gradually came awake and waved her hand to signify that the seance was at an end.

As we made ready to depart, Wood Orchid produced a roll of coins wrapped in red paper and handed them to the witch, after which we all bowed to her; but she paid no attention, so one by one we went out through the narrow door and the long winding hallway. I was the last, and as I went out I glanced back and saw the witch carefully picking up her beautiful water pipe.

My mother emerged with an ecstatic look on her face, and smiling. It was the first time that I had seen her smile like that since my father died.

But she was still concerned as to whether he was sufficiently provided for in the other world, and I heard her expressing this to her mother and wishing that she could burn some spirit money for his use. This was risky. There was not only the certainty of grandmother's dire displeasure if she learned of it—and she had a way of knowing about everything—but also the danger of our family losing face as Christians if it should come to the ears of the church.

In this dilemma her mother rose to the occasion with a suggestion that seemed exactly to fit. She was about to burn an amount of spirit money and thus transmit it to my maternal grandfather as she regularly did, and proposed that my mother add her contribution to this, saying that she was sure that he would share these extra funds with my father if he was in need. To this my mother unhesitatingly agreed, and when it was done, was almost happy once more.

II

Junior High

THE SUMMER after our old teacher died in the middle of the year, Third Uncle came home from Hong Kong and decided to send us to a regular school instead of engaging another teacher to continue our family school. An important factor was the growing efficiency of the government schools and their more modern curriculum. The question was what to do with me. I had been at home a half-year, learning the usual books on filial piety and family harmony from mother, and doing embroidery and assigned household tasks under her strict direction. I was eager to continue my formal education. My uncles agreed, and suggested that I go along with my brothers to the government school, which admitted a few girls, but grandmother vetoed this in favor of the school for girls that had been established by American missionaries.

When Kiu Kung heard of this he came to grandmother in great distress. "There is scandalous talk about that school," he said. "They do not maintain a proper separation of the sexes. Ah Ling should not be allowed to go there."

Grandmother was touched by his concern for my welfare. "I don't believe that talk," she said. "Look at all the rumors that were spread about us when we joined the church."

Kiu Kung still was not satisfied.

"Why don't you go to the school and see for yourself," she

suggested placatingly. Which he did.

"I have been misinformed," he reported when he returned. "The teacher of Chinese there is a famous scholar. I saw him, and he told me that there were no men there except himself and a gardener and a water carrier. And he said that our Chinese culture is taught and honored."

This was a new adventure. After an early breakfast on the opening day, I went with Orchid Blossom through the street to the school. Inside a long, low wall there were three two-storeyed brick buildings with tiled roofs and glass windows, surrounded by dragon-eye trees. Here I studied for three years. I loved it.

I was delighted to find that Miss Ling, my beautiful Sunday school teacher, also taught here, and indeed most of the teachers were similarly smart and beautiful young Chinese ladies.

My English teacher was an American missionary. She had a quite different chin, a high nose, deep eyes, and her strangely colored red hair was arranged in a coil. Her round head and large body were connected by a wide and short neck. She was enclosed in a queer-looking dress, below which appeared large legs ending in tight black shoes. On my second day, after mathematics class, we were talking and making a lot of noise when one of our classmates called out that the setting hen was coming. Every student quickly sat down in her seat and became quiet. I wondered who this could be and watched the door to see. But it was only our missionary teacher who bustled in, and I had to agree that her figure and voice justified the nickname the girls had given her. She was much respected as a good and painstaking teacher and was generous with her time in giving help to individual students, but we thought that her discipline was unnecessarily strict, particularly as her high voice, which we likened to the cackle of the hen, tended

always to give the impression that she was scolding us, which made the girls dislike her. She was sincerely interested in us and sought to make friends, but most of us tended to hold aloof.

The relations with the American missionary who played the piano for the daily chapel service were somewhat similar. We admired her playing, and as many took lessons from her as she had time for. Once she was asked to coach the players for one of the theatricals the girls delighted to put on. One scene called for a girl, who was impersonating a man, the villain of the play, to have an unlighted cigarette between her lips. The teacher, arriving at this juncture, immediately walked up, took the cigarette out of the girl's mouth, and threw it away with the remark that she wouldn't have anything of that sort around the school. The girls felt that this was not reasonable, and never asked her again for anything of the sort.

There was no question of any of the girls smoking. The school had strict rules against this which no one ever thought of disobeying. Their concern was with what they considered called for by the play. They had gone to a lot of trouble to get that cigarette and were proud of it as an ultimate realistic touch.

This school was a new world to me. There were new relationships I had not previously experienced, and new freedoms I did not know how to use. The girls were less formal than in my home, and more free in talking and discussing together than in our old family school. The relationships between students and teachers were friendly and democratic. Soon I found myself joining with the girls in their games and getting acquainted with my teachers.

The textbooks were different. I knew nothing except Chinese literature, in which I was far in advance of the others in my class. History, geography, civics, mathematics, and

science were new to me. Music, physical education, and drawing were what I liked best.

I began English and learned that "the cat can see the rat." I thought of the opening lines of the Three Character Classic that I had learned on my first day in our family school: "The nature of man is originally good." Education in English seemed less philosophical.

There were courses in Bible, which were made attractive, and we liked the daily chapel we were required to attend and entered happily into the singing and listened with interest to the talks and prayers.

I had great difficulty with my new subjects but I enjoyed having lessons where the meaning was the important thing and not the routine memorizing of sounds apart from sense that had so far constituted the greater part of my schooling.

It took a long time for me to break myself of the habit of studying out loud. I got into trouble with that in my very first class. When the teacher came in there was a buzz of noise, so she rapped on her desk for quiet. Now in our school at home that was always the signal to begin studying out loud, so I dutifully let go in my best manner with the high-pitched yell with which I had been accustomed to dominate the racket in our noisy classroom at home so that the teacher would know I was there and putting my soul into it. That brought down the house. The girls burst into a gale of laughter. I particularly noticed one girl near the front who laughed until the tears ran down her face. Even the teacher joined. I could not at first understand that they were laughing at me. Then the teacher explained. But it was a long time before the girls stopped teasing me about it.

At first I was unable to study without repeating my lessons out loud. Merely taking in words through the eye seemed far less effective than when sight was reinforced by the feeling

of my organs of speech as I pronounced them, and by hearing them. Three sensations were better than one.

I hit on a scheme of slipping out at times and climbing a tree in a secluded corner of the orchard back of the school building. There I settled myself comfortably with a book and studied as audibly as I pleased.

When I had been doing this for a few days, I looked up and saw another girl standing close by and listening. I recognized her as the one who had laughed the loudest at my discomfiture. When I stopped she came forward and climbed the tree next to mine with great agility, settled herself facing me, and looked across with a friendly grin.

"I am Hwa Nguk," she said. "I'm studying the same lesson and I often come here for it. Why not do it together?"

I had the same warm feeling as when Sixth Sister had made the same proposal on the first day at our family school.

"Done," I replied with alacrity.

"Begin at the top of the page," said Hwa Nguk. "One, two, three," and we were off.

This soon became our regular practice. It did something to me. Here was a thing I had missed since Sixth Sister had dropped out of our family school and left me the only girl. Of course I had had no lack of companionship in our household, but that was given and received as a matter of course and without any factor of choice entering in. This was different. It was my own.

Hwa Nguk was a very pretty girl, but she didn't look it. That is to say, her nose was too small, her eyes too slanting, and her upper lip too short. Her hair and eyebrows were very black, her cheeks were very red and her teeth very white. Just like any other girl. Perhaps it was the way all these features were put together, or rather that they never stayed put very long but were constantly being assembled and reassem-

bled in accordance with some active and impish spirit within her.

She was a good student and held a scholarship, but dressed poorly. I later found out that she was the daughter of a Christian farmer in a neighboring village.

2

Until this time I had never seen any but men teachers. Indeed, it had never occurred to me that a teacher could be anything but a man, for the same word, *sien-sen* means both "mister" and "teacher." But here most of my teachers were young women. And they were Chinese and not foreign. I looked on them with amazement and admiration, and followed their every move. How well they seemed to know their subjects. How self-assured they were. What dignity and authority they possessed. Just as much as my old teacher. And then the light dawned. Their status was just the same as if they had been men. Here was real equality. This was what I had been feeling the lack of, without quite being able to put it into words for myself. This was the meaning of my growing feeling of injustice over the disabilities imposed by family and clan because I was a girl. I decided then and there that I would be like them.

I talked this over with Hwa Nguk, who confided to me that she felt the same way. These talks intensified my own ambition.

This was a feminine world. So was the women's part of our home in which I had grown up. But this Christian school was different. Women had a status here in their own right, and not by virtue of being the mother or wife of some man, and in danger of losing it in case of the death of the man on whom it depended. Here women stood on their own feet, and I had

no doubt that in the world outside they would be able to hold their own. That is what I determined to do.

The semester after I entered, the school adopted a uniform, blue blouse, black skirt, and sox. The skirt came just below the knee, the sox just above the calf, and between the bottom of the skirt and the top of the sox there were three inches of nothing. I viewed this with misgivings, but when we had all donned our new clothes and were lined up for inspection, nobody paid any attention to me for we all looked alike.

Orchid Blossom stared at me with a mixture of admiration and dismay when she came to take me home that afternoon, and I had doubts about appearing on the street in this guise, but no one gave me more than a passing glance. At that time all schools were adopting uniforms and I was merely another girl student. But my reception at home was different. My mother was aghast.

"My dear Ling Ling," she exclaimed, "do you mean to tell me that you went through the streets looking like that?"

"Yes, mother," I replied. "This is our new uniform that all of us are required to wear."

First Aunt came in and walked clear around me. "So this is the modernization about which we have been hearing so much," she said disgustedly. "The men cover their legs with trousers and the women uncover theirs."

Third Aunt looked me over critically. "Those legs of yours are going to look very nice in silk stockings when you get a little older, dearie," she remarked pleasantly.

This offered a ray of hope. But not to my mother. She summoned Ni Niang and ordered me to take off my skirt for immediate alterations.

"But my teachers won't like it," I wailed. "They will give me demerits for disobedience."

"No matter," said my mother, adamant for once. "No

daughter of mine is going to go around looking like that." And she told Ni Niang to let out the hem as far as it would go.

Next morning at school, when we were lined up for gym class, all the skirts were the same distance from the floor except mine. This was glaringly apparent, and I was the butt of laughter from the girls and reprimands from the teachers. I hastily clutched my skirt, raising it to the required height, and as soon as I got a chance, pinned it up. This enabled me to get by, but I carefully unpinned it before I started for home each time. This skirt seemed to be a sort of barometer of the changing conditions at home and in school. Was this progress? I didn't know. It was at least in an upward direction.

The mission maintained a school for boys in the next block, and certain classes were merged for reasons of economy. There were also joint examinations. A boy always got first place, but there were more boys than girls at the bottom. We were elated that we could hold our own. Here was more equality. In the joint classes we girls insisted on being seated at the back of the room so that the boys could not play tricks on us. We also exacted an agreement that they were not to look around and that we should enter last and go out first. But in spite of all this we contrived to steal glances at each other. This called for finesse. It was wonderful. But disturbing.

In fact two of the pupils fell in love in this way. But they could only steal an occasional glance, and had no other way to communicate, and did not know each other's names. The girl began to make discreet inquiries among her classmates and everyone in on the secret became terribly interested, but the boy came from a distant place and no one in our school knew anything about him. He did better, but it was months before she received her first note from him. Then they were utterly dismayed to find that they had the same surname. This would normally prevent a couple marrying, even though, as in this

case, they were not related and their villages were seventy miles apart. But not these two. Their families made a terrible fuss, but I heard that they eventually married.

I shall never forget my first experience in seeing kissing. A couple of missionaries had just returned from a furlough in America, and we students stood in line on both sides of the entrance to welcome them. A coolie set off firecrackers. Two sedan chairs carried in a young woman and her husband, who marched forward and kissed our missionary teachers. This was quite natural to them, but not to us. We were accustomed to seeing babies kissed by their mothers and nurses, but if any other kissing went on in our household we had neither seen or heard of it, although we had heard that kissing appeared in some of the romances we were not supposed to read. Hwa Nguk and I were seized with the same impulse at the same time and began to clap, and the whole student body burst into hysterical applause. Our Chinese principal turned and ordered us to stop, and later punished us. When this outbreak was over I began to feel embarrassed and could only look down at the ground.

3

One of the elderly women missionaries had a tiny flower garden in a far corner of the campus, where she used to putter among her beloved blossoms. This doubtless helped her to pass many an hour of the loneliness that is inevitable for those who live in alien lands. She was a kindly and ineffectual old maid, always shabby because she put most of her salary into supporting students from Christian homes—I learned later that Hwa Nguk was one. I discovered her garden in my second week. Some of the first blossoms had just come out and I promptly picked a couple and put them in my hair. She

came along a little later, missed her precious flowers, and running across me soon after, was righteously indignant at seeing me wearing them. She rebuked me kindly but severely, intimating that I had stolen what did not belong to me. In our household we used to pick flowers growing outdoors at will, also I was not accustomed to rebuke by anyone except mother and grandmother, and was outraged at having a rank outsider assume their prerogative. Although she was not my teacher she was much older than I, so I had to be polite to her. I carefully removed the flowers, handed them to her, bowed low, and departed. I never spoke to her afterward. This was my first personal contact with a missionary and I'm afraid it has colored my relations with missionaries ever since, although I have come to respect and admire many of them.

Our school emphasized preparation for life, and in that connection had a Chinese lady doctor from the Christian hospital give us a series of talks on sex education. We were terribly embarrassed. I was fourteen and had no knowledge or experience of sex whatever. The woman's world in our home was virtually sexless and for all those years before school I had never spoken to a person of the opposite sex except to those of our family—uncles, brothers, cousins, and servants. The biological details overwhelmed us. The good advice merely tore the veil of romance from secret longings that we had not been able to put into words even for ourselves. We could not look at each other, but held our eyes on our desks in a fixed stare and resolutely closed our minds to what was being told us. I for one remember almost nothing of that well-meant series of talks.

But perhaps my most vivid impression of my first school days was the music, and I joined with enthusiasm in the singing at our daily chapel. I had never seen a piano. It seemed to me something wholly of another world. I was enchanted.

My first brother liked to sing, and used to invite his musical friends to bring their instruments and make an evening of it. They held forth in the reception hall, and we girls would stand outside the door and listen. But there was no harmony, the instruments playing in unison with lots of rhythm and noise. Also, Chinese music can be played on the black keys of the piano, and the richer scale made Western music far more interesting.

I went at once to the office to ask if I might take lessons, but found that the schedule of the missionary music teacher was already overcrowded. I was bitterly disappointed, but took it out in dreaming of playing the piano nearly every night. On one occasion we had guests, and mother gave up her room and slept with me. In my dream of playing the piano my fingers strayed to her face. She thought it was mosquitoes, and slapped at them, striking my cheek and waking me up. I did, however, soon qualify for the church choir, and found that joining with our big congregation in singing the great hymns of the church was a deeply moving and satisfying experience.

I still remember vividly the beautiful colored eggs I found on my first Easter morning on the campus. Our family teacher had told us about the Cold Food Festival that comes about Eastertime and was already an old custom in China at the beginning of the Chou Dynasty a thousand years before the Christian era. At midspring, a herald with a wooden bell went around to order the extinguishing of all fires in the empire, and for several days people were not allowed to light fires or cook. Meat or cold rice would spoil, but hard-boiled eggs would last for several days, and were colored and sent to friends.

None of my missionary teachers knew about this, and indeed they all seemed to think that Easter eggs were a part of the Christian contribution to China. But none of the Bible

lessons I had studied mentioned Easter eggs. So I asked where in the Bible it told about them, and my teachers said nowhere, and that it was a custom borrowed from outside Christianity. I wondered why they should not borrow some of our Chinese customs instead of always Western ones.

4

First Uncle's Malay concubine died during my third year at school, as simply and quietly as she had lived among us. I had become more interested in her after my trip to Java and, knowing something of her home and background, was able to sense her loneliness among us. She would sometimes notice me watching her and smile faintly, and on rare occasions would motion me to come into her room and sit a while, but she never learned enough Chinese so that we could talk. She endured a double exile, cut off from her own people by being brought to this far land, and from bodily and even verbal contact with First Uncle, for whose sake she had come.

There was no sickness. Nothing seemed to be the matter with her. It was merely that one day she was there and the next she was not. Her disappearance left scarcely a ripple. Her daughter, who had moved among us shyly in the same shadowy way, was taken back to Java by First Uncle on his next trip, to be married there among her own people. She did not count as one of our clan. If she had been a boy it would have been different.

5

During the fall of my last year, there was a series of revival meetings in our city and my grandmother and I went every night. The first night the minister preached about Heaven

and Hell and who went to each place. I thought it over, and decided I would not be very bad or very pious but just have a good time and not go to either place when I died.

Next night he preached about hellfire. I realized that I must go one way or the other. I became frightened. After the meeting I came home and prayed and tried to be saved. I was now fourteen and the question of religion was uppermost in my mind. The last night's meeting was a crisis for me, and when the minister asked who would like to go forward, I went. I began to read a chapter in the Bible every day and to pray more, and tried to be a better Christian, but it did not seem to me that I was very successful.

I owe much to this school. My later education merely took me farther along the same road. It was this modest mission school in my home city that really opened the door to this wonderful new world. No later experience could match it.

My purpose by this time was firmly fixed. It was to achieve status and equality as a person by becoming a high-school teacher. This purpose and my Christianity were inextricably intermingled, for the one was the offspring of the other. The contribution of Christianity was clear, and the mere existence of the school was sufficient demonstration of it, for there was no other school for girls in Kan San. Nor did my teachers fail to emphasize that from the Christian point of view there was neither barbarian nor Greek and neither male nor female.

I could not help comparing the two sorts of foreign women who entered my life—the pathetic helplessness of the Malay concubine with the constructive energy of the American missionaries. Many were accustomed to laugh at them as women who could not get husbands in America, but my ambition enabled me to sense dimly that theirs was a voluntary dedication. Also they had something—a spiritual power that none of the rest of us had.

6

Orchid Blossom took me to school each morning, and often spent considerable time in the school gatehouse waiting to bring me home again. She always used this time for study.

"You ought to be going to school also," I told her one day as we were returning.

"I would like to very much," she said eagerly, "but I have my work to do. How could I?"

I motioned to the Christian primary school we were just passing on our way home. "You might just as well spend time studying in there as by yourself in the gatehouse of my school. I'm going to ask grandmother about it."

"I'm afraid she would not like to have me ask to go to school," she said doubtfully. "I'm only one of the slave girls in your family."

"You leave that to me," I told her. "We can at least try."

Orchid Blossom had to a considerable extent kept step with me in my studies. This began even before I entered our family school, when my mother was teaching me the classic of filial piety. This had to be memorized and our way of doing so was to repeat it out loud. She heard me say it over and over, and in the end knew it as well as I did, and this led my mother to take an interest in seeing that she learned its meaning when I did.

When I entered school it was the same. Her main duty was to serve me, and her other tasks did not take much time except when we were rushed with polishing rice or sorting and packing dragon-eyes and lychees and she had to help. So when I was doing my homework she was usually beside me. I tried to get her to sit down at my table so that we could study together, but she would never do so, and insisted on keeping to her place as a slave girl, and stood and looked over

my shoulder. As fast as I finished a textbook I turned it over to her, and she was always asking about words she did not understand.

So I put the matter up to grandmother, who promptly gave a decided negative. "That is not what we bought her for," she said. "She is here to work, not to study. Besides there are seven girls of our own family in your generation and you are the only one who is getting an education. Why then should we educate a slave girl?"

At this time our household received a number of visits from a Bible woman connected with the church. She was a widow of middle age who had a primary education and some special schooling in a Bible training institute. She called first on grandmother and presented her with a pamphlet in a red cover that contained a simple outline of Christian teaching, and explained what it was about. This, like the Bible and most other Christian books, was not in the literary style and vocabulary, but in the everyday language of the people. In this, Christian books had anticipated the Renaissance Movement with its emphasis on the vernacular.

She then asked permission to teach the book to anyone in the household who might be interested, and she specially included servants and slave girls, saying that they were all equal in the sight of God. Grandmother was very dubious about this, but readily gave permission for teaching the book to any who wished, and ordered a servant to conduct the Bible woman to the women's dining room, where practically the whole feminine population of our household quickly assembled.

The visitor distributed copies of the book with the red cover and said that they would first read some of it, and that afterward those who wished to do so could buy a copy for a few coppers. Then she began, reading a few words and having them read them after her.

"Why, this book talks just the way we do," exclaimed Sixth Sister's slave girl. "We don't have to learn a lot of new words, but just use the ones we already know."

"That is right," said the Bible woman. "This book is for everybody and not just for scholars."

"Can we learn to read it?" asked the slave girl who had spoken before.

The visitor nodded.

"Then I want one," said the girl.

"So do I."

"Me too."

And in a few moments all the books were taken and the Bible woman had promised to come from time to time and help them learn to read and understand the book.

This started a sort of miniature mass education movement in our household. These books in the vernacular made an immediate hit and greatly lessened the labor of reducing illiteracy and getting the beginnings of an education.

From this our plan of schooling for Orchid Blossom got unexpected help. The Bible woman, as she came from time to time, was greatly impressed with her intelligence and ability and told grandmother so.

"That girl is a very superior person," she said earnestly. "It would be well worth while to give her a chance for further schooling. She would profit by it."

"But that will cost a lot of money," said grandmother.

"It is very cheap at our school a few steps down the street from here," said the Bible woman. "Only a few dollars a year."

Grandmother promised to consider the matter, and when I added my plea, she consented.

But an unexpected obstacle arose from the attitude of my fourth brother. He had a slight opinion of education and had dropped out before finishing high school and was now a clerk in our pawnshop. He had still less enthusiasm for spending

money on a slave girl and declared himself opposed to having any of the family income dissipated in that fashion.

I was much upset over this, but my mother came to the rescue and provided the tuition by selling some more pearls.

"But she cannot go to school dressed like a servant," objected grandmother.

"Ni Niang and I will make her a dress," said my mother. "I have some material that will be just the thing."

Orchid Blossom was then almost twenty-one and found it very embarrassing to go into a class with small children. But she was determined that nothing should stop her, and the teacher gave her a seat in the back row. She entered the third grade, completed the sixth grade the following year, and entered junior high the fall after I graduated.

So it came about that the slave girl and I were the only two girls in my generation of our family that got an education.

7

Although we learned new ways in school we were held strictly to account at home according to the old standards.

One day as I came back from school I passed outside the reception hall and saw grandmother, First Uncle, and Fifth Granduncle talking and sipping tea. I entered and paid my respects, bowing to each in turn.

"Is that Number Seven?" my granduncle inquired of grandmother.

I bowed again to signify that it was really I, and the old gentleman continued softly:

"Your eyes are getting larger now and could not see the little old granduncle."

I blushed, for he meant that I was proud. I remembered that one windy winter day as I was hurrying to school I saw him, dressed in a blue long gown and his head covered with

his red flannel wind cap, with its cape extending down over his neck and shoulders, walking very slowly with his cane on the other side of the street. I knew that I ought to stop, step to one side, bow, and remain motionless until he had passed, but I was late, and the flaps of his red wind cap were hanging in such a way that I thought that perhaps he didn't see me, so I just slipped by.

Fifth Granduncle continued to look at me impersonally. I didn't know what to say. The silence was terrible.

Finally First Uncle, who was a friend of mine, took pity on my confusion. He seemed amused, perhaps at seeing his brash little niece speechless for once.

"Run along, Seven," he said in his big jovial voice.

I hastily bobbed an abbreviated bow to each and ran.

8

One Saturday afternoon in spring, I went fishing with Hwa Nguk and Po Ing, another of my fellow students. This was the third time I had been out of the city, and it was a great lark, for we three could go as we pleased, whereas previously we had been in charge of our elders.

We went out the south gate, with its tower, massive doors, and uniformed guards, and along the street to the stone bridge across the river. At the far end of the bridge was a pagoda some seventy feet high, built of stone blocks exquisitely carved with hundreds of figures. Beyond was another bridge and a causeway beside which was a small pagoda with a single narrow door and no windows.

"That pagoda is the home of the Snake Goddess," said Hwa Nguk. "Here she hides from the thunder spirit who wants to kill her because she has sinned. When people try to enter, she kills and eats them. Come over and I will show you."

"Not I," I answered positively. "I'm afraid of thunder and

snakes and spirits and I don't want to be eaten. Let's go along."

Hwa Nguk was the eldest and lived out this way, so she led and we followed along narrow winding paths between the rice fields. It was a beautiful land. To the east rose a wooded hill topped by a Buddhist temple with upturned eaves from which came the distant sound of a bell. Far to the west uprose a long, blue range of mountains. About us were brooks and ponds where women chattered as they knelt and spread wet, folded garments on flat stones and smacked the dirt out of them with wooden paddles. We passed groves of lychees and dragon-eyes, and village after village. Every turn disclosed new beauty, a slender palm rising above a wall of yellow clay, or a pool with a kingfisher poised iridescent above it.

We went to a place about two miles from the city where we found a little pond, called Bamboo Grove Pond for a thick bamboo grove nearby. Here we cut poles for fish rods. Po Ing dug worms, I tied the hooks on the fishlines, and Hwa Nguk began pounding something on a stone.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"I am making a fishhook," she answered.

"We have plenty of fishhooks, so you don't need to make one," I told her, and brought her one.

"No, thanks, I always like to make my own. That gives me good luck," she said. Then she showed me how to do it. She skillfully bent an inch and a half of wire into an S-shaped hook. It looked stronger than the ones we had bought from the store. Po Ing came back with two big earthworms. Hwa Nguk cut them into small pieces and fitted them onto the hooks.

"Now we must separate and fish in different places," she said, and went to one end of the pond, and Po Ing to the other. I sat in the middle.

The emerald bamboos were whispering in the slight breeze. The grasshoppers were feeding in the soft green grass. The fragrance of the wild flowers was pungent about us and the sounds of birds filled the air. Gently we lowered our hooks into the placid water. With cheerful hearts we prepared to give a warm welcome to the darting fishes. We felt like characters in a poem.

Hwa Nguk caught the first fish. It was only about eight inches long, but she soon had a second and larger one. I was anxious to have the third one and kept trying one place after another but with no result. Hwa Nguk came softly and told me in a low voice to keep quiet and be more patient, to hold the pole firmly, and not to move it and scare the timid fishes away.

I now tried to quiet my heart, just as I did in practicing penmanship, and was soon rewarded. It was not as large as the others, but I looked with delight on my little flatfish with its soft fins in the bamboo basket beside me. I was proud of my friend, Hwa Nguk, who was continually catching others.

The weather changed suddenly. A tigerish west wind blew up heavy banks of cloud from the western mountains. The dark sky was lurid with lightning. We started for home but the storm was coming to meet us, and we were soon in the midst of pouring rain and had to find shelter. We looked around, but there was nothing in sight but a single small building half hidden in a cluster of bamboo. We ran toward it, crossed a threshing floor, and found that it was a small, doorless, single-room temple. Within, it was filled with ghostly images, terrible-faced figures standing in threatening attitudes. We looked at them uneasily. Then at the far corner there arose the human figure of a beggar with a pale and gloomy face. He advanced toward us. We backed away from him but he kept on coming. We were in a panic. I threw my

fish at him, and we ran as fast as we could through the rain along the slippery, narrow paths.

Soon we came to a group of buildings hidden under the trees. The path turned into a cobblestone road along which we hurried hunting for an entrance. Then we came to a little brown dog sleeping beside the wall under the eaves, who at once jumped up and began barking at us. Ahead, a middle-aged woman with a blue cotton jacket and black cotton trousers looked out of a door. Hwa Nguk went ahead and asked for shelter.

"Come in, come in," she said hospitably, and we lost no time in entering. "You are welcome." Then she looked at our bobbed hair and school uniforms and continued doubtfully, "That is, if you are not coming to cut my daughter's hair off."

This was the time of the New-Life Movement, set up by the National Government to foster economy, simplicity, and morale, and teams of students had been going from house to house for queue cutting.

"No, Mu-Mu," said Hwa Nguk, addressing her as elder aunt, "we are not come for that purpose."

She led us through a narrow, muddy hall crowded with pigs and chickens, then over a high doorsill into the reception room, where we were seated on a bench beside an old, greasy eight-fairy table. The whitewash had peeled off the low ceiling, and the wall was covered with soot. I looked around with interest for I had never been in a country home before.

"Po Po, come serve tea to these guests," she called.

"I am coming," answered a girl's light voice from the next room, and in came a pretty little girl of thirteen years, delicate and fragile, with a pair of bright eyes sparkling at us. When she set out tea for each of us, a blush spread over her little watermelon-seed face, and she immediately went back to her room. Our hostess sat down on a bench opposite us.

"Are you not from the city?" she asked.

We nodded.

"I can tell by your costume," she went on. "A lot of girl students have come, but I keep my daughter hidden away in the inner room."

We went out from time to time to look at the sky, the rain became heavier, the sky became darker, and we became more and more worried. Our hostess tried to comfort us.

"I sympathize with you," she said, "but this is Heaven's doing and we can only accept it. It is no use to worry. Just set your hearts at ease and stay with us for the night. We have plenty of room. All these around us are empty houses."

She went to the kitchen to prepare supper and we helped her daughter to take care of the fire, and dried our wet clothes. After everything was ready to serve, our hostess buried a few sweet potatoes underneath the hot ashes to be baked for night refreshment.

Next to a big water jar was a red-varnished eight-fairy table against the wall on which was set out a dish of salted eggs, cut into quarters, a dish of roasted peanuts, a dish of green vegetables, and a dish of sweet-and-sour fish which we had contributed. In the center was a saucer of soybean sauce. An old red-varnished bamboo lampstand hung on the wall; on it was an old-fashioned iron dish, filled with peanut oil, in which a piece of bamboo pith served as a wick. We all sat down around the table for supper.

"I have nothing with which to entertain you but this ordinary meal," said the lady of the house with courteous simplicity, "and hope all of you will help yourselves just as in your own home."

After supper she took down the lamp from the wall and led us across the narrow hall to her own room where she

served tea. On the wall hung a bicycle, which she called a "foreign horse."

"Do you ride the bicycle?" Hwa Nguk asked the little girl, Po Po.

She shook her head smiling.

"My brother brought it from Java for my son," our hostess explained. "He never learned to ride it and it has been hanging on the wall here for seven years."

"Is your son in Java now?" asked Hwa Nguk.

"No, he is working in Kan San," she said. "He was only seven when his father died. We thank the kind Wong family that they were willing to take him in one of their shops as tea boy. Now he is a clerk in their pawnshop."

Po Ing pointed at me with her finger. "That is your shop," she said.

Our hostess came and took both my hands. "Are you a member of the Wong family? What relation are you to Lao Tai Tai?"

"She is my grandmother."

"Oh, my heaven. I am very glad to meet you. You know we have a double relationship. We have been working on your family farms here for two generations, first my father-in-law, then my husband. Then my nephew's wife was a slave girl in your family. Her name as a slave girl was Chiu Chai."

"I remember," I replied. "Isn't she married in Lu Ah village? We call her Lu Ah Sister. She comes to visit us very often and I knew her well."

"We respect your grandmother very much, and I hope my son will become a good and useful man under her training."

She went to the kitchen and brought the baked sweet potatoes, which she gave to each, but kept the biggest for me. She nodded toward the little girl.

"She is my son's fiancée," she said. "I bought her when she

was three days old." The little girl hung her head blushing and went on eating her sweet potato. She licked her little pointed fingers after she finished.

It was now late. The rain had almost stopped. Our hostess gave us her own bed and went to the next room. The double bed was big enough for us three. It was a layer of straw on wooden boards with a mat of woven straw over it. On top was a blue cotton bag with a three-inch layer of cotton inside of it. We got in and blew out the lamp. It was quiet inside and out. The rain dripping from the eaves was the only sound.

The mosquitoes and fleas were soon everywhere searching for us. One kind outside, the other inside. Hwa Nguk proposed that we get inside the cotton bag to escape the fleas, and one by one we wormed our way in and covered our faces with our dresses. Just as we were at last falling asleep we heard a sound of tinkling of spoons and dishes and a rattling of dried peas from the kitchen. Then came a creaking of a door, and the "mie-me, mie-me" of slippers approaching through the hall, nearer and nearer. We were in great fright and drew our heads inside the bag. I grasped Hwa Nguk's arm and whispered in her ear:

"Do you hear those sounds?"

She shuddered.

"What do you suppose it is?" I asked.

"Maybe thieves," said she.

"Maybe bandits," said Po Ing.

"I think it is ghosts," said I. "We'd better wake our hostess."

Hwa Nguk, being the eldest, got out of the bag and went into the next room on her tiptoes. The lady of the house soon returned with her and lit the lamp, whispering to us:

"Do not be afraid. This happens often, but I pay no atten-

tion to it. This is the reason why all the other people who used to live here have moved away."

The sounds came louder and louder, closer and closer. We became more and more frightened.

"What shall we do?" asked Po Ing.

I fell back on my new belief in Christianity. "Shall we have worship and ask God's help?" I whispered.

"A good idea," said Hwa Nguk. "Let us get up and dress."

The lady of the house woke her daughter-in-law and joined us as we stood in a frightened circle.

"Now what do we do?" whispered Hwa Nguk.

"Suppose we follow the program of our school chapel, sing a song, read the Bible, and have prayer, except that I don't know about doing the preaching," I said. "Do you think it would be all right if we left that out?"

Hwa Nguk considered this anxiously. "I guess we'll have to," she said.

So we decided on a hymn and a psalm that we knew from memory, and the Lord's Prayer.

"All right, now we start," said Hwa Nguk. She held up a finger and counted, "One, two, three." We sang our hymn and repeated the psalm and the prayer, the older woman taking it in with earnest heart, the little girl sleepy.

The sounds did not stop and even became louder. We were still frightened but began to feel a little more confident.

"We had better go through our service again," said Hwa Nguk.

So we did, over and over, five times, while the sounds became less and less and finally died away. Our hostess gave a long sigh.

"Those sounds usually begin after we blow out the lamp and continue until cockcrow," she said.

I wondered how they could stand it here year after year,

their only neighbors the empty houses, the trees, the rain, and the mournful winds.

"I have heard about the church but I do not know what people do there," said our hostess earnestly. "I would like to know who God is, and what is Jesus."

I replied that we did not know much in detail, but that she could come home with us and ask grandmother.

This experience remained deeply impressed on my mind. It gave me a feeling of confidence on the one hand, and on the other it raised questions as to what actually happened that night. Before this I had merely been afraid. Now I began to try to reason things out. Perhaps the noises we heard were only the creakings of an old house. But if so, why did we not hear them before the lights were off? Perhaps they were made by robbers. But then, why did the dogs not bark?

This was one of the greatest forces urging me to further study of both science and religion. After I graduated from college my religious beliefs gradually became less superstitious. Then after I had met different kinds of people, especially Christians, and had read more about religion, my religious attitude changed from the scientific to a greater emphasis on life and became less emotional and more intellectual.

But during this time we had outside dangers to face, as well as spiritual and family complications. Our new Christian point of view was a help to us, particularly where some problem of modernization was involved. Other complications grew out of age-long customs and relationships and still had to be worked out on that basis.

III

Outer Dangers and Inner Complications

SEVERAL YEARS after we became Christians, we were having supper one dark, windy evening, when grandmother's little black dog, Haba, began to bark and went tearing off. We could hear the sound of him echoing in the reception hall and moving through the outer courtyard to the gate. Cook set out his food and called, but he paid no attention and kept running in and out and barking.

He was about a foot and a half long, with short legs, long ears, and a round face. He was not a common type of Chinese dog and his name, Haba, means "foreigner." He was active and alert and always barked when any stranger entered our gate, or even loitered in the street outside. Whenever he did so at night it made us fearful of robbers. For, ever since the prolonged attacks we suffered from one gang several years before, whom we bought off with a monthly subsidy, we were still subject to sporadic attempts of others to rob us.

Our city had no modern police department. Each section simply had its own guardian, usually an elderly shopkeeper, chosen informally according to ancient custom and serving on a part-time basis without pay. His duties were to act as the representative of the community in disputes, give advice, and engage a night watchman, who patrolled the streets, beating

a gong so that marauders could know that he was coming and keep out of his way.

Modern city organization was still in the far future for places like ours. There was no city water, sewerage system, or even collection of garbage except as night soil, to be used as fertilizer for market gardens and rice fields, was carried out in the early dawn in open buckets that left trails of noisome stink. The government made various plans for modernization, but met solid resistance to the heavy tax increases necessary. Indeed the medieval economic fabric of interior cities like ours could not carry the cost of a modern city government. Thus our security depended to a considerable extent on our own vigilance.

It was with this danger in all our minds that grandmother ordered a slave girl to go to the front courtyard and take a look. She was quickly back and reported that she saw no signs of anyone. So grandmother rubbed Haba's head and tried to quiet him. Usually when she did this he would lie beside her or put his head on her knees. But this night the effect was only temporary. As soon as she got him quieted, he would jump up and rush out into the courtyard again.

After supper we adjourned to the reception hall, as the men were away, and the hall resounded with the unusual sounds of women's talk and laughter and the shouting of children. Our presence seemed to reassure the two dogs, but when the group broke up, they refused to follow grandmother to her room as they usually did. Black Dragon stayed on the steps of the reception hall with his eyes directed toward a stone bench near the big goldfish *kang* of yellow glazed pottery, and Haba kept running in that direction and barking. We finally went to bed and left them there, where they continued to bark. Black Dragon was old, so he had to bark a while and rest a while, but Haba went on without stopping.

We had no more than gotten to sleep when the dogs woke us up. Haba was not only barking furiously but scratching at grandmother's door. I heard her clear her throat, and people began to stir in the other rooms, so we got up and went to her room just as she was opening the door for the dogs. Haba took her skirt in his teeth and tried to get her to follow him.

"There is something strange about this," said my mother, appearing at her door.

"Something wrong . . . hah . . . I am sure," snorted grandmother, following the dogs into the reception hall, where we were joined by children, servants, and slave girls. Sixth Sister came running and took my hand. We always felt better when we were together.

Grandmother told Sixth Brother to go out to the gate and see if anyone was there. I shouldn't have liked to do that, but brother made nothing of it.

"Nobody there," he reported briskly.

But as he went, both dogs ran barking toward the goldfish *kang*.

"There must be someone behind the *kang*," whispered grandmother.

"I can see something under the stone bench with the jars of peonies on it," whispered Sixth Brother. "It smells of strangers in the house."

"I can see it," said I, peering more closely. "There is a dark patch right under the flower bench."

We all watched for a while.

"It must be a ghost," said I, "no human could stay so long without moving."

"It is probably a thief," grandmother whispered in reply. "It is certainly not a ghost, for the dogs are facing it. If it were a ghost they would be turning tail."

This seemed conclusive, and made me feel much better.

"Shall I slip out through the back gate and get the police

or go to one of our shops for help?" whispered Sixth Brother.

Grandmother slapped his wrist. "No, no! The thieves might not like it."

"Do we have to be polite to thieves?" asked brother.

"It is always well to be polite," she replied sententiously. "But if they were cornered they might do something desperate. Besides, don't you remember how the gang vowed to be revenged on us when your first uncle helped the police to capture one of them, and how much trouble we have had ever since."

She paused and we all tried to think of some way to outwit them.

"I feel sure that these are sneak thieves," she whispered. "They must have come in and hidden while we were all inside eating supper. Then when we went to bed they probably started to break in but the dogs woke us up. Now they will wait until we are asleep again. We must not make any move to fluster them or to provoke them to violence."

Just then a gust of wind blew out the candle in our paper lantern. Grandmother put her lips to my ear.

"Go in quietly and tell them to close and bar all doors and windows."

When I came back, Sixth Brother was stretching his arms and yawning like a cat. Grandmother looked at him.

"What can we do now?" she whispered half to me, half to herself. "As soon as we go to sleep they will rob the place."

"Will they do so?" whispered Sixth Brother. "Then suppose we just don't go to sleep."

There was a pause while grandmother thought this one over. The thieves hiding in the courtyard. Waiting. No man among us to oppose them older than Sixth, who was fourteen. But perhaps they didn't know that. Suddenly she cleared her throat like a bugle.

"I don't seem to feel at all sleepy," she complained loudly.

"How about you children. Aren't you about ready to sleep?"

"Not I," said Sixth in his deepest voice.

"Not I," echoed the rest of us.

Little Toto woke up at this point and made her usual request: "Tell us a story, grandmother?"

"A story!" we all clamored. "A story! A story!"

Grandmother settled herself in her big chair, which creaked loudly. Sixth Sister moved closer and took hold of my hand. I could feel her shaking. The dogs, hearing our voices, ceased barking. Probably the thieves also were listening. I thought I saw one of them move, but I could not be sure.

"I am going to tell you a story," grandmother began loudly, "so that you may know what is right and what is wrong, and how to live in human society.

"Once there was a peddler going along the street with two baskets of fish suspended from his carrying pole, one in front and one behind. A boy sneaked up behind him and stole a fish. The peddler felt the difference in weight and turned about quickly to catch the thief. He saw the boy walking away with his hands hanging empty at his sides, but could not see that he was holding the fish by its tail between his teeth. The street was crowded but no one cared to get mixed up in any trouble by telling on the boy, who might be one of a gang for all they knew, so he was not caught.

"When he got home and gave the fish to his mother, she was much pleased with his cleverness. So he first became a pickpocket and eventually a robber."

Grandmother went into no end of detail, and rambled and repeated herself and snorted and moralized. I missed most of it for I was far more intent on watching that dark patch near the goldfish *kang*. So was Sixth Sister, and when we thought we saw it move, our teeth chattered in unison. I put my arm around her to comfort her, but I am sure that I was more scared than she was.

"What happened to him then?" asked Sixth Brother, playing up.

Grandmother cleared her throat loudly. "One night," she resumed, "he and one or two of his wicked friends went to rob what they thought was a rich family, in fact much like ours, although they did not realize that there was hardly anything worth stealing, and they got caught."

I thought that this ought to have a good effect on the robbers, and hoped that they would take it to heart.

"Were they punished?" asked Sixth Brother dutifully.

"This poor young man and his two wicked friends were tried and sentenced to death, and ordered to be taken at dawn to the Dead Chicken Field to be executed."

This was certainly bringing it home, for Dead Chicken Field was the popular name for the execution ground outside the west gate of our city.

"When the three robbers were about to be shot," grandmother continued, "this young man's mother came weeping, and the police allowed her to say farewell to her son. But instead of responding as she expected, he reproached her bitterly for not educating him properly, and especially for praising him instead of punishing him when he stole the fish, and growing more and more angry he ended by biting off his mother's left ear."

As she came to the conclusion of this pious tale, grandmother held forth like the evangelist we had gone to hear at the church the previous fall, but mingling Buddhist, Confucian, and Christian arguments.

"Everything has its certain result. A good act has a good result. A bad act has a bad result. A man does not have to be a thief. There are many kinds of honest work which he can do. An honest man earns his living by his own labor and his own sweat."

Grandmother went on and on until at length the crowing

of a rooster interrupted this homily. It began to get light. We heard the cries of the earliest peddlers of hot food in the distance.

"Well, well," said grandmother innocently. "How long that story has taken. You young folks had better get some sleep."

But cook was already astir with hot tea for grandmother, and we all had some.

"Unlock the outer gate, and leave it open," grandmother ordered cook loudly.

Cook was puzzled but obeyed.

"Now we will all go into the house," said grandmother, and we all followed her through the bamboo curtain into the inner apartments. She turned to Sixth Brother and me. "You two stay and watch what happens," she whispered.

We peeked through the cracks in the curtain and after a bit saw two men rise stealthily from behind the fish *kang* and slink out the gateway.

Just as they disappeared we heard loud voices outside.

"What are you two doing, coming out of the Wong gateway at this time in the morning?"

Grandmother heard this. "That must be the watchman," she exclaimed. "Quick," she commanded cook. "Tell them to let those two go. Say that I order it."

This was done.

Sixth Brother and I went out to where the thieves had lurked during the night, and there we found two pointed knives about a foot long, a coil of rope, a file, and a lot of keys.

We gathered these up and carried them triumphantly in to show to grandmother, while the two dogs ran around us in circles and barked.

2

One of the disintegrating factors in our growing financial

difficulties was the rift that developed between us and the powerful Chen family, with which, for generations we had had close business and official relationships, and into which First Uncle had married off Second Sister against our better judgment. It began with a matrimonial triangle.

Some four years after her marriage, Second Sister had come home for one of her usual visits. But I didn't see her. Sixth Sister, who was her own sister, told me that she spent most of her time in her room, and a good deal of it in weeping. Her personal slave girl, Beautiful Plum Blossom, also stayed closely with her and went about looking as if she too had been crying.

Sixth and I, who were then eleven, thought at first that Second Sister was sick. Then Sixth told me she was feeling badly over not having borne a son since her marriage. We thought that perhaps she was now going to have a child and was staying with her mother during this period. Finally Sixth confided to me in an awestruck whisper that it was not Second Sister but Beautiful Plum Blossom who was going to have the baby. This gave rise to a period of scandalized conjecture that eventually turned into certainty.

Second Sister had had a dowry befitting the daughter of a family like ours, which included, among other items, a hundred dresses and three slave girls. Her personal maid, Beautiful Plum Blossom, was the daughter of a distant poor relation, a carrying coolie who owed a considerable sum of money to our family and had turned her over in part payment of the debt. The girl was a little beauty and was like her name, with ivory skin and rosy cheeks. She was very trim and neat. Her mouth was small and her lips thin, and she spoke with a very delicate, almost birdlike voice.

It has been pointed out that the beautiful and clever ones among the slave girls were always potential competition for the gentry wives, who were expected to be on the alert and so to order their household as to safeguard and maintain their

own position. Here Second Sister was at a disadvantage in several ways. She was married at sixteen, and although she made a charming bride there was nothing much behind her pretty face. She had no education whatever, little experience, and still less worldly wisdom. Her mother, First Aunt, was no help to her in this regard.

Then she and Beautiful Plum Blossom were devoted to each other, even closer than Orchid Blossom and I, and it did not occur to her to be on her guard. And indeed she was right in not being apprehensive so far as the girl was concerned. For although she was even prettier in her way than grandmother's Jem Po, she was her opposite, for Jem Po was proudly conscious of the effect she had on men, whereas Beautiful Plum Blossom was modest and very shy and always cast her head down when she met a man, even those of our household with whom she was in daily association.

I never learned what had actually taken place, for if that aspect of the affair was discussed it was not in my hearing and was not reported to me. Most of this news reached me through Sixth Sister, who was plunged into grief by the sadness of her adored big sister, and transmitted the general gloom to me by a sort of chain reaction.

It seemed that when Second Sister and Beautiful Plum Blossom had been first confronted by a realization of the situation, they had wept together, for the meaning of all of this for herself and for her relations with her husband and her future status in his family penetrated Second Sister's mind only slowly and it was some time before she could grasp it in its entirety. Then she had bitterly reproached the slave girl, whom she was beginning to regard as a dangerous rival. Beautiful Plum Blossom listened submissively, weeping quietly until sister had finished.

Then with the greatest simplicity the slave girl had offered to kill herself.

This broke Second Sister up, for she was still, in her somewhat stupid way, fond of the girl, and after that she did not dare to scold her for fear that she would really do so. This upset Beautiful Plum Blossom still more and she cried all the time.

Second Sister did, however, make a halfhearted effort to get rid of her, but the girl did not want to leave. Where could she go under the circumstances, she asked. Certainly not to her poverty-stricken family, who would feel that she had disgraced them. Second Sister could make no answer to this, and had no idea how to go about arranging a marriage for her. Then she made a timid approach to her husband, but this got her nowhere and indeed led her to fear that if she made an issue of the matter he might even be inclined to side with the slave girl against her.

The ladies of our family were shocked and displeased and put most of the blame on the husband's family rather than on Beautiful Plum Blossom. We were particularly disappointed in the husband, who had seemed to be straightforward and serious-minded. Third Aunt, who was the society member of our household and combined knowledge of the world with self-assurance, summed up the consensus of our woman's world.

"If he wanted that girl," she said tartly, "why didn't he at least have the decency to go about it in an ethical manner instead of in this surreptitious fashion. All he had to do was to say to his father that he would like to have the girl as a concubine. His parents would have agreed as Ah Sen had borne no children, and for the same reason she would have had to consent when her mother-in-law proposed it. Then everybody would have been happy. It has been done before. Even in our own families."

Although neither my father nor Third Uncle had taken concubines, my great-grandfather had had two concubines,

mother's grandfather had had four, grandmother's father three, and, of course, First Uncle had brought his Malay concubine home from Java, and we all took such relationships more or less as a matter of course. The new central government had passed laws forbidding this, but it did not occur to any of us to take them seriously, except for Second Brother, who was a law student and had a lot of new-fangled ideas anyway.

3

On the day after this became known, Second Sister went as usual to pay her morning respects to grandmother, who was seated in her big chair playing with her little gray monkey. Grandmother put a few brief questions to Second Sister, and then sent for Beautiful Plum Blossom, who soon came and knelt before grandmother, which she had never done before. Grandmother glared balefully at her, and handed the little monkey to one of her slave girls.

It was like a courtroom scene, grandmother with her feet on a footstool, with the two slave girls standing behind her, Second Sister at one side, and the culprit, shaken with suppressed sobs, kneeling to receive sentence. Indeed it was a court, so far as our clan was concerned, for grandmother wielded an absolute authority, all the greater in that it was not merely legal but could cut direct to the heart of the matter.

"You cry, but you cry too late," said grandmother angrily. "What a foolish girl you are," she went on bitterly. "Here you have been over ten years in our house and have received the same training as all the rest and yet you turn out like this. You were a good girl here at home, why have you suddenly changed so fast?"

She paused. The girl continued to weep softly. No one moved.

"If I had known you were like this," grandmother continued, "I would never have let you go with Ah Sen to serve her in her new home. We did not expect that you would do a thing of this sort."

She paused again and leaned forward impressively. "You have done a great injury to Second Sister," she said coldly, "and have caused a great loss of face to both families, particularly to ours. How do you have any face to go on living?"

Beautiful Plum Blossom raised a lovely tear-stained face and for the first time met grandmother's eye.

"Lao Tai Tai, all that you say is true," she said simply. "I am ready to endure any punishment you decide on. Even if it is death, I will not draw back."

There was a long pause while grandmother studied the slave girl's face intently. At that moment she held in her hands the power of life and death, and no one in our household ever questioned that if she had given the word the girl would have killed herself without hesitation.

Of course all of this was totally extra-legal, and in case of the death of the girl, it would have been quite beyond the reach of the law. Indeed it was a prelegal situation, perpetuated by the clan system into our modern day.

At length grandmother broke the tense silence. "It would not help any for you to die, child," she said more kindly. "That would involve more loss of face and would not undo what is done. You know the proverb, 'The tiger dies and leaves his skin, a man dies and leaves his reputation.' But at present you have no good reputation to leave. It would be no use.

"There will be no punishment," she continued after a pause. "But you must apologize to Ah Sen, and you must continue just as before to serve her and obey her. Particularly to obey."

"Oh, thank you, Lao Tai Tai, thank you," sobbed the girl hysterically. "I will do anything you say."

"I will tell you later just what you must do," said grandmother grimly. "Now make your apologies."

Beautiful Plum Blossom crossed the floor on her knees to where Second Sister was standing and crouched before her.

"Oh, I acknowledge my wrong, I acknowledge my wrong," she repeated over and over in an agony of tears.

But Second Sister could say nothing in return and the two girls wept together.

"A veritable pair of babes in the woods," grandmother remarked later when speaking of this scene.

4

All this clarified relationships within our family circle but presented no solution for those with Second Sister's husband and his family, which still remained to be worked out.

Second Brother, who had opposed this marriage from the first, came home at this time and was very bitter. But when he was pressed for some practical plan he had little to offer. Nor did he get any help from his father, First Uncle, and I wondered whether he knew about his various establishments where we had stayed on my trip to Java. I was now beginning to realize their true nature, but I had never discussed First Uncle with anyone.

First Uncle himself was in a dilemma. He was sincerely fond of his daughter and pained by the situation in which she was caught. Also he was secretly chagrined over the failure of his fine plans for her marriage. On the other hand he had close business relationships with the Chen family. Here goodwill was of the essence and would be jeopardized by any drastic action.

But there was an even more important consideration. Sec-

ond Sister had already lost face with the womenfolk of the Chen family by her failure to regulate her own establishment, and this to a certain degree involved him also. What is more, the Chen family also had connections in the South Seas and would know of his various extra-marital establishments there and would laugh in their sleeves if he made a fuss over a thing like this. Indeed, he might even lay himself open to some public innuendo that would make him ridiculous.

It should be noted that "extra-marital" is the most available English term but fails to cover accurately the Chinese situation, as it implies a status both illegal and outside the ethical code. Marriage in China has been traditionally looked on more from the family than the individual point of view. Sons were essential. A wife who did not bear a son was expected to agree to the taking of a concubine, and such an extension of marriage was sanctioned by the supreme Confucian ethical requirement of filial piety, for which a son to perform ancestor worship was the first requisite, and was quite legal, until the new laws of the central government in the 1930's put it on the more individual basis of the West. It was a short and easy step to more concubines for men so inclined.

First Aunt was no help. From her traditional viewpoint, the men of the family could do no wrong, and the wife should be subservient. In fact, she felt that things would have gone along all right if Second Brother had not gotten his sister all confused with his modern ideas, and she had better just make the best of things.

Grandmother's point of view was that a wife should be the head of the feminine side of the family and that if anything went wrong in her department it was largely due to her lack of good management. Indeed most of us felt that it was at least partly Second Sister's fault. It was implied, although nobody said so directly, that she was a bit stupid.

Finally, grandmother summoned my mother, my two aunts,

and my first sister-in-law to settle the matter with Second Sister, as the time was approaching when something had to be done. I was with her at the time and she motioned me to stay.

"Now, I am going to tell you what you must do," she said, putting the issue directly to Second Sister. "You remember my cousin who married into the Zee family?"

Second Sister nodded.

"Well, her case was like yours. Three years had gone by and she had no children and the Zee family had begun to put pressure on her husband to take a concubine. My cousin got more and more worried, because if the concubine bore sons, and she had none, the concubine would in time usurp her position, and she would cease to be first wife except in name. So she took things into her own hands, as you must do, and had her personal slave girl sleep with her husband. Then when a baby boy was born she took him as her own son, married the slave girl off, and thus maintained her own position as head of the household."

"But what about the slave girl?" asked my mother. "What did she have to say about it?"

"Nothing," said grandmother. "That is, of course she said a lot and cried a lot, but it all amounted to nothing. After all, she was only a slave girl. My cousin had her marriage all arranged in advance. Naturally it was not a very good marriage. That could not be expected under the circumstances. But my cousin gave her a very generous dowry, and gifts from time to time."

My mother broke in. "But that is cruelly hard on the slave girl," she said. "One of my relatives did the same thing, but the girl refused to leave her baby and rejected the marriage they tried to force on her. But she soon found that the mistress had the advantage, so she ran away and became a Buddhist nun."

Second Sister began to cry. "Oh, I could not do that to Beautiful Plum Blossom," she exclaimed.

Third Aunt laughed. "She and that husband of yours have already taken the first step. You have to look out for yourself. What you must do now is exactly what your grandmother has told you. Take over the baby and get rid of the girl. We can easily find a husband for her. She is pretty enough so that plenty of men will be ready to take her at a bargain price."

Second Sister and First Aunt looked at each other in dumb agony. Both shook their heads.

"I believe that you are still fond of that girl in spite of all this mess that she has gotten you into," said Third Aunt contemptuously.

"I couldn't drive her to suicide," said Second Sister simply.

"Nonsense," said Third Aunt, "she is only pretending. Think of what she has done to you."

"Anyway, I can't," said Second Sister stubbornly.

"We women are too soft," said Third Aunt, "and the men take advantage of it to do what they please."

Grandmother intervened to bring the matter to a conclusion. "You had better do what I tell you," she said severely.

But none of the others really expected Second Sister to do anything, for they knew, without being told, what was in the back of her mind—First Uncle's contemptuous treatment of the mother, and her timid and rather stupid daughter's fear that her husband might mete out the same treatment to her. But it was more than that. Both mother and daughter had a simplicity and goodness of heart that made them incapable of inflicting misfortune on another for their own advantage.

5

The baby was a boy. If it had been a girl the matter would

have been simpler for Second Sister, for the family of her husband now entered into the picture. Their reaction was twofold. On the one hand they had prided themselves on being a strict Confucian family, and an irregularity of this sort caused them to lose considerable face and this they felt keenly, so much so indeed that at the end of the first month, when there is usually a feast and celebration of great importance, particularly in the case of a first son, nothing at all was done and the whole thing hushed up as much as possible. In fact we heard that Second Sister's father-in-law was greatly displeased by his son's irregular behavior and gave him a powerful talking-to and, according to one rumor, a beating, but this of course could not be confirmed and was a family matter that would never be admitted to any outsider. On the other hand, while a girl baby could be ignored, a son was a son, and as Second Sister had as yet borne no child, they were not at all disposed to jeopardize what might be their only hope for the perpetuation of their branch of the clan. The child must be kept.

Second Brother made an effort to arrange an immediate marriage for the girl as our fulfillment of the contract by which she was turned over to us as a slave girl, and thus to get rid of her. But she refused to leave her baby. This brought her family, who were distant relations of ours, into the controversy. They objected that a good marriage was impossible under the circumstances and did not want to see her married off to some much older man or a very poor one, probably the only kind available. Others of our poor relations joined with them and threatened to make a scandal if this was done. A family council was therefore called at which all interests were represented, and it was decided that the best thing was to regularize the matter by making Beautiful Plum Blossom a concubine. Even Second Brother had to agree that no other course was practical. Second Sister accepted, and this was duly carried out by the Chen family.

Grandmother gave Second Sister some pointed admonitions on the art of managing a family. This experience seemed to do something for her, for she proceeded to put them into practice with what seemed to us who knew her to amount to an astonishing success. First, she took prompt measures with regard to Winter Plum, the second of her three slave girls. She was rather young to be married, but sister feared another case of the same sort and was taking no chances. So she married the girl off as soon as possible.

A year later she gave birth to a son, and at the end of the first month there was the usual celebration, all the more elaborate because of the circumstances. First Aunt was inevitably invited as the maternal grandmother of the child, but grandmother would not allow her to attend, for she felt that this affair was an evidence of low moral tone in the Chen family and that any association with them would involve additional loss of face for us, and so a junior member of the family was sent instead. Thus grandmother had the last word in what had been a sad affair and a loss of face all around.

Beautiful Plum Blossom enjoyed a favored position as a concubine which exempted her from practically all tasks and enabled her to lead a pleasant and leisurely life. On the other hand she continued as my sister's personal slave girl and served her as formerly. Thus the triangle was stabilized in a fashion characteristically Chinese. In this an important factor was the genuine friendship between the two girls, and the obedient and gentle disposition of the slave girl. She regularly came with Second Sister on her visits to us and was received with politeness, but when she went to her former place with the other slave girls at meals, grandmother made no move to invite her to eat with the ladies of the family. Her new status as a concubine received no recognition in our household.

She had had no more children since those days, so it seemed that Second Sister was fully in control of the situation, and we

concluded that her husband had discontinued his relations with his concubine in order to avoid any further complications. This seemed to be confirmed later, when grandmother was seriously ill and notice was sent to all her descendants. He had to come, for Chinese etiquette requires attendance in person in the case of sickness or death, although festivities may be attended by proxy. He did his duty in paying his respects, but hung his head and would not look any of us in the eye.

Second Sister bore him a number of children and even got to the point where she could scold him a little on occasion. This she recounted to us with pride, and it seemed to give her a wonderful lift. And so the three lived together in amity. Grandmother often used to say in later years that the stupid daughter had not managed her marriage so badly after all.

But this did not clear up our difficulties with the Chens. Both families continued punctiliously to observe all of the amenities, sending each other invitations to ceremonies and festivities, all of which were duly acknowledged. However, neither family actually attended any affair of that sort, except as on certain ceremonial occasions a junior member was sent. So the rift between our family and theirs remained to plague us later.

PART FOUR

Troubled Times

AN ANCIENT *empire ends in confusion after two millenniums. A new democracy seeks to catch up in two decades. There are new ideas of infinite promise, new freedoms that we do not know how to use, new problems that we do not know how to solve, all further complicated by a world at war.*

I

Disturbed Conditions

DURING my years in our family school I began to be more conscious not only of our corporate life as family and clan, but of the disturbed conditions outside, in city, district, and province. This state of things was not new in China, as those who have read our popular novels, such as the *Three Kingdoms* or the *Water Marshes* know. And these are laid in the third and twelfth centuries. Indeed, it may be said with considerable accuracy that disturbed conditions are normal in China. These usually include an element of banditry that has had for centuries almost the dignity of a recognized profession, for the founders of several dynasties got their start in this way, our Chinese bandits being something of a cross between Robin Hood and Genghis Khan.

The Chinese people have learned to accept and make the best of such disturbed conditions, and contrive to compensate for them or, at worst, to take their losses and continue to carry on.

I have vivid memories of two disturbances that involved us. The first took place during my second year in junior high and was in connection with our forest. We owned three mountains at a place called Tong Mang, forty miles west of Kan San. These were covered with great trees and were a source of both income and trouble. We were in need of funds, so Kiu Kung

made a trip of inspection to see what the possibilities were. On his return he brought with him the foreman of the woodcutters.

First Uncle came into the reception hall with a long pipe in his mouth, and soon grandmother entered, as always between her two slave girls and with the two dogs following her. A slave girl poured the usual tea. Then grandmother turned to the foreman.

"Please make your report," she ordered.

The foreman stood up.

"The mountains of your honorable family are now heavily wooded," he said respectfully. "The trees are old and tall, and shade each other so that the younger ones have no chance to develop. The larger ones should be cut."

Kiu Kung spoke up. "It is better to burn off all the underbrush first to drive out the wild beasts."

"How many trees are there?" asked First Uncle.

Grandmother answered: "According to the original deed, east mountain had three hundred trees, west, two hundred fifty, and the middle mountain had six hundred twenty, total eleven hundred and seventy."

This was typical of her memory. She remembered everything. When uncle or Kiu Kung wanted to know the payments on rent of any of the farmers, she could tell immediately and correctly.

"But the base of the east mountain near Mu Na village has been cut over by the villagers," said Kiu Kung. "There are probably less than a thousand trees left on the three mountains."

"Less than a thousand!" exclaimed grandmother indignantly. "That is a heavy loss. We should collect damages."

The foreman looked embarrassed, and Kiu Kung spoke up.

"I fear that there is nothing to be done, Lao Tai Tai," he

said. "It means a loss of one-sixth of our timber, but the people who have cut it come from all the villages in that neighborhood. Everybody does it, everybody knows it, but there would be no evidence and no witnesses."

"How much labor would be necessary to cut the remaining large trees?" asked uncle.

"A hundred workers could complete it in two months," replied the foreman. "That is, if we could get them. But I do not know whether I can find that many. We ought to start in the early spring, but that is the farmers' busiest time."

"We must have at least a hundred," said grandmother, "because the larger the group the greater their courage. There are tigers in those mountains."

And so it was agreed.

I wanted to give them some of my own suggestions, but I knew that it was not the time for me to say anything in the presence of adults. So I followed grandmother to her room.

"Grandmother! Why couldn't we use the method of cutting big trees by machine? That is how they do it in Old Gold Mountain. They can cut down a big tree in five minutes."

That was what we called California. I had read about it in the Foreign Geography.

Grandmother laughed. "No, my dear," she said, "we haven't that kind of machine here so we can only use saws and axes to cut them by hand."

She settled herself for a rest in her long armchair, so I bowed and left.

2

Kiu Kung made a number of trips while the cutting was in progress, and finally came back to report that the work was all done and the logs bound together into a raft, ready to be

floated down the stream. First Uncle was pleased. He figured we had spent about three thousand dollars but would make a profit of three times as much.

"A thousand thanks to Heaven," said grandmother piously.

Kiu Kung turned to her soberly. "I have a further matter to report. Now that everything is over and the rice is cooked and ready to serve, I can venture to tell you a dream that I had the second time I visited the mountain. I saw a middle-aged man crying with his head down on the table. After that I was worried all the time. But I prayed to the spirit of the mountain every morning and asked him to bless the good and avert the evil. And I vowed to do alms if it came out all right."

"Is that all? Of course we must keep your vow to this spirit," said grandmother, still mixing the theologies.

Next morning grandmother's dog Black Dragon had a fit of hiccups. Grandmother believed this foretold the coming of guests from a distance. She sat down and had him sit beside her, and rubbed his throat and talked to him.

"If you know that we have guests coming, you hiccup three times and no more."

Black Dragon knew what grandmother said to him. So he hiccuped once. Grandmother fed him a piece of cake and had me give him a drink of tea. After drinking he hiccuped twice, as if saying thanks to me. He did not do it again. About noon, a young man came and reported that the raft was already halfway down the river and they expected it to arrive at the south gate of our city on the day after tomorrow. This pleased grandmother very much and she asked the cook to bring Black Dragon a big bowl of noodles because he had made a true prophecy.

All the slave girls were busy cleaning the back courtyard under the direction of Sui Te, the water carrier, and covering the ground with a layer of brick on which to pile the logs.

Several of us children helped carry bricks from the orchard.

Early the next morning Tung Tung Ko was cleaning his pistol in the inner courtyard, and after breakfast two sedan chairs came to take him and Kiu Kung to meet the raft. Kiu Kung first went to his room. I knew he went to pray to his divinity. I followed him to his door, where I could see him bow deeply and touch his beard with his right hand. Then he put his two palms together in front of his chest and I could hear him murmuring a prayer, after which he bowed and took three steps backward, before turning to leave the room. Then he went to tell grandmother that he was going to meet the raft, and said that he planned to have a big meal for the workers.

"All right, go ahead. Give them as good a meal as you can because they are honest and have worked hard," she replied.

Usually Orchid Blossom came and waited for me at the school gatehouse, but that day she was late, so I started back alone and we met halfway. She was looking very gloomy.

"I am sorry to be late," she said. "Tung Tung Ko came back and reported that the raft has been broken up by bandits. Your first uncle has sent the secretary of the pawnshop to report it to the magistrate and ask for help."

"Did Tung Tung Ko shoot any bandits?" I asked.

"No, because the crew tied the raft to a rock and went to the Ah Ming Hotel, a mile away, to have the feast Kiu Kung had promised them, and while they were eating, the bandits came and cut the ropes so the logs scattered and floated down the stream. Now we must hurry back and see what's going to happen."

When we entered the gate we could feel the excitement. The military police had come and the reception hall was full of them in their yellow uniforms and with their revolvers hanging from their wide leather belts. First Uncle was sitting

in a sedan chair with three bearers. Tung Tung Ko was talking with a group of police. I went to grandmother's room to report back and pay my respects. I found First Aunt, Third Aunt, Mother, and Elder Sister-in-Law all quiet. Usually we had a short time of sociability, but grandmother only glanced my way and said nothing, so I left for the kitchen. It was quiet there too. Everybody was working without talking and looked glum and out of sorts.

3

A few days later the case came up in the district court. It was thought that because this had taken place just outside the city, something might be done about it, particularly as this was one of the new courts that Second Brother was always telling us about, and the judge was a graduate of the law school he was attending. The court session was at night, and because our teacher of Chinese boxing was interested in going, my brothers and I got permission to go along. Sixth Sister wanted to go also, but grandmother said one girl was enough, and I had asked first.

We carried two lanterns. One was in Tung Tung Ko's hand as he walked ahead. Then followed my brothers, the boxing teacher, First Uncle, and Kiu Kung. The other lantern was carried by our cook, who was sent along to look after me, for that was the first time I had been out at night.

"Toi!" a voice came suddenly out of the darkness and startled all of us, especially me. I could hear my heart beating fast. We stopped while my uncle went ahead to speak to the soldiers with long guns on their shoulders. Then we passed through a gate and crossed a courtyard. We could now see a large room with light shining out through the windows on both sides. We entered. The judge sat behind a table in the

middle of the upper side of the hall. He was a young man with a serious face, a small mustache, and thick lenses. Two men were writing at desks. Our lawyer sat in a front seat on the right. Another man sat in the same position opposite. I thought he must be the lawyer on the other side. Uncle sat behind our lawyer, and the rest of us behind him.

First our lawyer stood up and told the story in detail, how bandits had cut loose the raft and the logs were gone. He argued that this must have been engineered by bandits connected with the sixteen villages along the river below this point, for the logs could not be taken upstream. He further stated that this could not be done without its being generally known, and that doubtless the sixteen villages were all in it.

The opposing lawyer now spoke, stating that he would prove that none of these villages had stolen any of our logs. Then he introduced his witnesses. The first was a very old man who came forward to represent his village and faced the judge.

"My village has always been pure and honest. We have never injured anyone but always protect the rights of others."

Then another old man with a long white beard over his chest arose. His back projected like the hump of a camel. His stick was longer than he was. He walked in slow motion and spoke in a shaky voice:

"I represent the next village. You can see how old I am. I am ready for my coffin. I have no strength to walk. How could I steal the heavy logs?"

And so it went. All sixteen representatives from the sixteen villages were aged men. All behaved in the same manner and told the same story. I could see the judge getting more and more angry, as this farce unfolded. After a number of them had spoken he rapped on the table with a ruler and stopped the performance.

"Are all the rest of your witnesses like this?" he asked the opposing lawyer.

"They are, Your Honor," said the lawyer, "but they are necessary to the complete presentation of our case."

"Proceed, then," ordered the judge curtly.

When the lawyers had finished he gave his decision.

"If these sixteen villages did not steal these logs, what happened to them?" he demanded sternly. "The raft could not disappear by itself." He paused to look them over. Then went on, "My judgment is this: Within the month you sixteen villages must pay to Mr. Wong the price of a thousand logs. If not I will send soldiers to collect."

After a few days a man representing the sixteen villages came to see us, and requested a reduction of the payment. After long arguments they finally paid half of the total amount. So with what we spent on the workers, the lawyers' fees, and other expenses, we lost money.

4

The next year conditions were worse. This was in my last term of junior high. Since ours was a girls' school, we seemed ordinarily to know less of what was going on outside our walls than would a boys' school. We were still further isolated by the fact that it was a Christian school, run by an American mission. But at this time the whole school was upset and its routine broken up. Anxiety and apprehension appeared on every teacher's face. There was trouble impending, but we students did not know just what.

One afternoon during my handicraft class a servant brought a note to the teacher, who looked it over, left the room immediately, and did not come back. We looked out and saw teachers and some outside men hurrying up and down the hall.

Then I was called to the dean's office, where I found First Brother, who was asking leave to take me home.

"What is the matter, First Brother?" I asked.

He answered me with one word: "Come."

He was in his most dignified mood as acting head of our household and I did not dare to ask any more but followed as he rapidly led the way out the school gate. The street looked entirely different. Shops were closed, with windows boarded over, and all streets were nearly empty, though in some of the narrow lanes women looked out of their partly opened gates as we passed and called excitedly across to each other to know what was going on. We now began to hear sounds of "ping-pang, ping-pang."

"What is that, First Brother? Is it shooting?" I asked.

"It seems so," he replied shortly and continued his rapid strides.

All at once a troop of green-uniformed soldiers appeared and ran with pale faces through the main street. They had rifles in their hands. Close after them raced a crowd of peasants, in plain clothes—blue cotton jackets and trousers, and straw sandals. A few had guns. Most carried spears. Before we realized what was happening they clashed in hand-to-hand fighting.

No sign of fear appeared on First Brother's face, but I felt like a frightened mouse with my life in my mouth. As the bullets began to fly he called to me to turn back a few steps, and we lay down on the ground behind a small brick tower for the incineration of paper. This provided some shelter, but in the thick of the fight my right leg was suddenly stung with a sharp pain. This made me momentarily forget the danger, so I started to get up for a look, but my brother told me to lie down again and keep quiet. Before I got down flat I felt a second shock.

"My right leg has been hit," I told him.

He rose up in haste to look and we found two swellings on the exposed portion of my leg between the top of my stocking and the hem of the skirt of my uniform. I had evidently been hit by a bullet that had ricocheted off a wall and lost much of its force. This was serious to me but not to my brother, who quickly wrapped it tightly with his large white handkerchief. The firing had now died down, so we hurried through a side lane until we reached our street. The main gate was tightly closed but the side door was partly open, and grandmother and mother were on the watch to let us in. They exclaimed over my bandaged leg and led me in solicitously.

"I am a war casualty," I said proudly, using a term I had recently picked up at school.

Grandmother took one look.

"Bee stings," she exclaimed.

"Where were you?" asked cook.

When I explained, she said that there were hives of bees near and that some of them had probably been hit by bullets, which had made the bees angry. This produced a shout of laughter and provided the one bright spot in an anxious time, but it was long before I heard the last of my being a war casualty.

5

A little later that day four young farmers came to our home asking for use of a whetstone to sharpen their spears. First Brother received them in the reception hall and had the servants pour tea and set out cakes. They were preparing to attack the garrison that night and expel the green-uniformed soldiers who had taken refuge there. They were all young men and full of determination.

"What is the cause of this fighting?" my brother asked.

One of the peasant-militia men, who was fat and had a baby face, told the details in a clear voice:

"These troops were sent by the provincial government about five months ago to take over the southern district. During this time they didn't perform their duty of protecting the people but, on the contrary, scattered throughout our villages and looted food and anything else they wished—the chickens in the coops, the vegetables in our gardens, and the fruit on our trees. The worst was their mistreatment of our village women, especially the younger ones. Many of the men were former bandits. It is as the proverb says," he concluded. "Rivers and mountains are easily changed, but the natural disposition of man is hard to overcome."

The gist of his story was that the commander of these troops had been appointed by the provincial government as district magistrate with special instructions to suppress banditry and restore order. He had accomplished the first by the time-honored method of taking the bandits into his army, thus greatly increasing his own power. He then set up as a petty war lord, squeezing for himself the entire amount transmitted by the provincial government for the maintenance of his troops, giving them a free hand to live off the country, and reserving the richest prizes for himself. One of these was the third concubine of a wealthy merchant, who had a reputation throughout the district for her extraordinary beauty.

His troops were more than ready to follow his example and enrich themselves at the expense of the people, and things went from bad to worse. The provincial government had appointed him because of his reputation as an able officer and had had no idea of this phase of his character. They were naturally reluctant to believe the first reports of his doings. But even when the case against him became clear, the provincial officials were too busy with other complications to bother about

conditions in such a remote region as long as the situation did not blow up. This indeed was the basis on which government had been conducted for centuries.

A boy about fourteen years of age now claimed the whetstone and began to sharpen a spear longer than he was.

"What can you do?" my brother asked him.

He began to tell us in his childish voice about the suicide of his sister. She had been betrothed to a boy in a neighboring village and they were to be married that winter. But one day there came eight of these soldiers, who not only stole everything in the house but took the girl. As soon as they were gone, his grandfather rushed out and called all the neighboring farmers from the fields. They were armed only with their hoes but they pursued the soldiers and brought back the girl. She, however, felt that she had lost her virtue and would rather die than live. So she jumped into the river and drowned. The boy burst into tears as he finished. I wept with him.

Virtue was deeply rooted in the people's minds. If one woman lost her virtue the whole clan felt that it had lost face. That this called for revenge was a universal conviction deeply buried in the hearts of all. The boy wiped his eyes and continued:

"My grandfather felt most painfully the death of my sister, so he got hold of a gun and joined the fighting. He is a good shot and has already killed seven soldiers, but I haven't yet killed a single one," he finished with an air of deep regret, and fell to sharpening his spear.

What their stories added up to was that finally conditions became so intolerable that the elders representing forty-three villages came together in a secret meeting and bound themselves to destroy these bandit troops. The rich gave money and the poor gave strength. Those who had guns brought them. Two thousand spears were made, and as many cotton pads,

which, it was hoped, would stop bullets. All of these were distributed to the villages under cover of darkness. The original plan was for two thousand men, but there were already three thousand.

The peasant leaders cautiously approached the rich merchant, for rumor had gotten about that the commander had been forcing his company on him, had contrived to catch a glimpse of the concubine, and was casting a covetous eye upon her. Therefore they figured he would be ready to co-operate.

He was. So the leaders put their heads together and agreed to use the "beautiful-woman stratagem." This was right out of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms,* which set the classic pattern for wiles of warfare and military skulduggery.

Accordingly the merchant sent word to the commander that he was going to make him a present of the concubine and invited him, his officers, and his picked bodyguard, to the number of five hundred, to a great feast to celebrate the occasion. This was accepted with alacrity, and the peasant forces began quietly to converge, filtering in, two or three at a time, during the day, with many more at night.

At the banquet, firecrackers were set off, and then the third concubine appeared, elegantly dressed, and served wine to the guests, particularly the commander, until she got them all drunk.

At midnight the peasant militia surrounded the barracks of the troops in the courtyard of a Buddhist temple. One party climbed to the roof, took up a number of tiles, poured in kerosene, and set fire to it, and by the time the alarm was given the whole great structure was ablaze.

The soldiers, awakening from drunken sleep, dashed for safety, and the peasants waiting outside cut them down as they rushed out one by one until the street was so piled with corpses that it was reported next day it was impossible to go from the

Christian primary school on one side of the Buddhist temple to the Christian dispensary on the other.

The commander rallied part of his forces and, when the fire died down at dawn, fought his way out and fled to a place some fifteen miles distant where he had more troops. But they were soon overwhelmed by the enraged peasants and had to continue their flight. Even when they got reinforcements from the garrison in Kan San they had to go on retreating and thus carried the fighting into the city, as the peasants were right on their heels. Some groups hid in various parts of the city. Most took refuge in the garrison. The Kan San magistrate was most reluctant to admit them, but could not well refuse as they were government troops.

First Brother told our four visitors that the magistrate had telegraphed the provincial government for help and that provincial troops were on the way and should arrive that afternoon. At this they became much excited. They said that there could be no peace talks at this time, for the fixed purpose of the peasant militia and of the people in all their villages was the destruction of these bandit troops, and seeing that the magistrate in Kan San had given them refuge, they intended to attack the garrison that night.

First Brother was dubious about their chances of success, but they told him that more peasants had been swarming into the city all day, and that their numbers had been greatly increased by others who had joined them during the three days of fighting. With this they hurriedly departed.

In the evening, fighting broke out but soon came to an end as the provincial troops arrived, marched to the garrison, where they disarmed the bandit troops that had taken refuge there, and then cleaned out pockets of those who were still defending themselves in various parts of the city. The next day they marched the bandits out the city along the west highway to their barracks, where they were placed in custody. Their com-

mander was court-martialed and shot, but nothing much was done to the soldiers, some of whom were incorporated into other commands while many escaped and became bandits again. Indeed these green uniforms kept turning up for a number of years.

We children were allowed to come to the front gate to see the provincial soldiers march by. They were dressed in gray uniforms and all had rifles. We had never seen soldiers so well equipped and disciplined. When order was restored, the whole city turned out and celebrated with firecrackers, and gave them a great feast.

I asked First Brother a question: "Why do we have all this disturbance?"

"I don't know," he answered thoughtfully. "Sometimes the people plunder those above them, as in the case of our forest and the raft of logs, and sometimes they are oppressed by the officials as in this case. It has always been that way, even before the time of the Three Kingdoms."

"But why do we have bad officials like that commander?" I asked.

"There are not enough properly trained good ones to go around," he said.

I know now that behind much of this was inexorable economic pressure. There were too many people for the food supply, and as the population went on increasing, the man on the margin became a bandit or went under. Indeed the line of demarcation between the honest man and the bandit tended to fluctuate with economic conditions, particularly famine. The same person might be one today and another tomorrow. When his children were starving he went forth to get food for them where he could, as men have done in all lands in all times. Such men easily joined forces in bad times with the riffraff and ne'er-do-wells found in all communities and drifted into banditry.

II

I Go to the Big City

At the age of fifteen I graduated from junior high school and was sent to senior high in the capital city of our province. But unbeknown to me, a number of obstacles had to be surmounted before this decision was reached.

The question of my betrothal had come up during my first year of junior high, as I was then twelve, which was the usual time for this matter to be settled, and a number of offers had come to grandmother from the other gentry families in our city.

My mother had long intended that I should marry into her clan, in fact she had the boy all picked out. For as far back as anyone could remember, each generation had seen a girl from her clan marry into ours, and one of ours into hers, which virtually amounted to an exchange of girls in each generation, for a girl cannot marry within her own clan. It had been my mother and grandmother's only daughter in their generation. Sometimes the exchange had been with one of our other branches in Kan San.

Such intermarriage was a large factor in welding the twelve gentry families in Kan San into an inner circle which for centuries had dominated the city and maintained a monopoly of scholarship, official position, and wealth. There were seven girls in our household in my generation, and we were one of the eight branches of our clan in the city, so that we regularly intermarried with all the other gentry families.

Mother and grandmother agreed that times were changing and that it would be well to have me and my future husband meet before making a final decision, so the young man was invited to some of our new year festivities. I immediately suspected what was going on, although of course I had not been consulted, so I approached the occasion with the greatest circumspection. It gave me a funny feeling. As if I were being put on exhibition. Here was a person who would assume a large measure of control over my future. It can easily be imagined that it made me wary.

The boy and I soon found out that we could be good friends—indeed we still are. We had the same background and spoke the same language, although we exchanged only a few brief words. He asked whether I remembered him from the time I had been sent to his home many years earlier because of the illness of my father. I certainly did, for he had been the most active in pursuit of our flirtatious slave girl, Approaching Happiness, who had been sent back to her home, largely because of him. But I felt embarrassed about mentioning this and doubted the wisdom of doing so. I couldn't help wondering, however, whether a pretty face might not have the same attraction for him after marriage. He now appeared the soul of propriety and even seemed to consider our family a bit rowdy and was always saying to me that a girl of our class should not do this and should not do that, which seemed to me to take a great deal for granted. We met several times, pleasantly enough, but without generating—in me at least—a single spark of romance.

I became secretly more and more uneasy. I could not with propriety mention the matter of my marriage, even to mother, assuming that I could have gotten up the courage to do so. It would have been considered highly immodest.

A marriage proposition of a different sort now appeared. The pastor of our church, for whom grandmother had a high

regard, came on behalf of the son of a country pastor. This boy stood at the head of his class in high school and would undoubtedly receive a scholarship to go to college or the theological seminary.

There was a trend toward intermarriage among Christian families, with which grandmother was in sympathy, and the Christian movement was the pioneer in the development of a professional class that depended on technical training and ability and thus cut across class lines. Grandmother asked many questions and politely told the pastor that she would consider the matter. My mother was favorably impressed. I knew nothing of this at the time and only heard grandmother's decision from mother long afterward.

"We have been a city family for eight generations," the old lady pronounced. "I am sure that this is a most estimable young man who will probably be very successful. But in marriage we must consider not only individual but family, which in this case is a country family of small farmers. We marry our slave girls into such families, but not our daughters."

And that was that.

It was Third Uncle who finally settled the matter.

"It is getting very embarrassing to keep putting off our friends in the other families about the betrothal of Ah Chih," he said, when grandmother had given a noncommittal answer to a request from one of his friends that I be betrothed to his third son. "Now I wish to make a proposal."

Grandmother nodded.

"Many families nowadays have girls who are exceptional," he went on, "and allow them to take special training as teachers, nurses, or for other careers. It is a good thing. Ah Chih is such a girl. She qualifies on two counts, her scholarship is good and she is ambitious. My proposal is that she be not betrothed but allowed to continue her education."

And so it was decided. I was wildly elated. I was now really

on the way to achieve my ambition to become a teacher, which had been steadily growing stronger. My mother sold a larger consignment of her jewels than usual to provide for the heavier expense at the famous school in the capital to which they decided to send me.

2

I started on the morning after the Moon festival, the sixteenth of the eighth month. The weather was fine and the air clear. Tung Tung Ko, my uncle's bodyguard, who always went with him on journeys, came in and reported to my mother that the sedan chair was ready. It was time for my departure.

My heart was bursting with both elation and regret. I bade goodbye to grandmother, mother, aunts and uncles with vinegar in my eyes, as the saying goes. I saw the tears on Orchid Blossom's cheeks as she handed me a box of candy. There were a lot of things we wanted to say but could not express, so we only looked at each other with tears. She was a thoughtful girl. I loved her with all my heart. She was never angry or lazy in waiting on me. She had been my closest friend ever since I was born.

Tung Tung Ko gave the word. The rear chair bearer tilted me forward as he raised the bamboo poles to his shoulders. The front bearer heaved his end up, with the help of the baggage coolie, and pivoted to face forward and grasp the ends of the poles.

"Go," he said. The men fell into step. The chair began to sway rhythmically up and down. We were off.

We went out the north gate of the city and soon entered a region of hills.

We stopped at the Stone God Pass, where we got our last view of Kan San in the plain below us, surrounded by its

wall twenty feet high, with the four gate towers, north, east, south, and west, and the river flowing around it on three sides.

Tung Tung Ko began to point out famous scenic places. First we came to Jade Peak, on the top of which we could see a tall green stone standing upright, from which the hill took its name. Five miles farther on we came to an overhanging precipice named Five Fairies Cliff after five famous brothers who had been Taoist hermits some centuries before. Tung Tung Ko said that their footprints were still to be seen. Soon after this we reached Swei Yen Mountain, where we passed cliffs and caves, ponds and springs, peach orchards, gardens, and temples. Here was a shrine to the Goddess of Mercy where women prayed for sons, and there a weeping stone that could foretell the weather. On top of the mountain was a pagoda from whence it was possible to see the sun rise over the ocean.

As our narrow road climbed higher we got glimpses of villages in the valleys below, and water buffaloes dragging plows through the flooded rice fields. I saw a number of water wheels that furnished power for hulling rice. This was my first sight of power taking the place of human labor. I looked with admiration at the heavy stone pestles rising and falling by themselves, instead of by the labor of slave girls as in our work shed.

After an hour or so the chair bearers stopped for a rest and smoke, and the baggage coolie, who had followed along behind, came up with a bamboo carrying pole over his shoulder, with my bedding roll with my book box on top dangling from one end, and my new, white pigskin suitcase from the other. The chair bearers soon finished their pipes, and we were off again. And so it went until noon, when we reached a larger village than usual and stopped for lunch.

The coolies set the chair down before the Tiger Shop.

I heard the local people gossiping excitedly about four bandits who had been captured and executed the night before. I asked Tung Tung Ko about it.

"Come and I'll show you," he said.

We walked a few steps and came to the gate in the village wall. There, above us, were four heads, with horrible, distorted faces, each topping a basket ordinarily used in collecting the dung of animals to be used as fertilizer. I did not stop for more than one look.

"We'd better hurry on and eat at the next large place," said Tung Tung Ko urgently.

I was quite ready to postpone eating.

"A bridge just ahead was wrecked during the night by the bandits," he went on. "That is one of their favorite tricks so that they can hold up traffic and rob travelers."

He called the chair coolies and told them to hurry.

"The bridge has been hastily repaired, so we can cross," he explained, "but they say the main body of bandits is still in the neighborhood, and they certainly won't be in a happy frame of mind."

We set out in a hurry and got past without seeing any signs of the bandits.

We were now among mountains that rose higher and higher as we began the ascent of the hundreds of stone steps that went steeply upward along the side of a ravine. The mountains seemed wilder with each step, until we reached the pass over Little Tiger Ridge. Here was a tiny village of a few huts on either side of its one street. We stopped at a hut on the lefthand side of the road. I came out from the chair and sat down to eat my lunch.

"What would you do if we met the bandits, Tung Tung Ko?" I asked him.

With a single smooth motion he reached inside his gown and presented an ugly automatic pistol.

"This will take care of the first five," he said casually, returning it to its place.

"But suppose there are more than five?" I asked.

"It depends on how many more," he said. "If there are only two or three I can handle them."

He held out his hand with the fingers rigid and close together. "See that edge?" he asked, turning the heel of his hand towards me. "I can break a brick with the edge of my hand. I practice every day to keep in shape."

"Do you break a brick every day?" I inquired.

"Not exactly, and not every day," he said with a grin. "I more often use a piece of board. It is softer and easier on the hands."

"That is something like the sword dancing I have been learning," I said, "but mine is only for exercise and show. My first brother really trains himself. He can hold his breath for three minutes."

"The first eighteen movements of sword dancing are the same as the basic exercises for fighting," smiled Tung Tung Ko. "You could easily progress to some effective methods of self-defense. You see those two fingers." He held up his first and middle fingers. "They are enough to kill a man if you know how to do it."

"I know," said I. "One of the ladies who studied this jabbed a man who tried to steal her hair ornaments in a movie theater. She caught him just right and made him leave her alone."

3

Soon after we started again, Tung Tung Ko pointed out a village across a valley. It was the most prosperous we had

seen. All the houses were of brick, two storeys and in semi-foreign style. I knew about this from a schoolmate who lived there. All the men spent years in Java and made a lot of money, while their wives looked after the ancestral fields at home. Where someone like grandmother was in charge things went on as usual. Otherwise the lonely wives tended to drift into a clandestine common-law relationship with the overseers of their property. Such unions could be ignored unless children were born, which were considered an evidence of disgrace. Consequently the stream that ran through the valley had become notorious from the number of babies that had been drowned in it. This to us was another evidence of the inequality against which I was more and more in revolt. Men like First Uncle could go abroad and have concubines and children and it was all right. If their wives, half deserted at home, took, so to speak, a male concubine, their children had to be killed. However, this village was exceptional.

As we descended into the valley on the other side of the mountains, I found the dialect and the customs different from ours although the distance was less than fifteen miles.

We now reached a village on the river. The narrow street was crowded. Here were butchers with their hogs, merchants with bags of wheat flour and tins of kerosene, carpenters with homemade furniture, blacksmiths with portable forges, itinerant barbers, and hawkers of dried sea food, pottery, and chinaware. Then there were farmers with their loads of grain, beans, fresh vegetables, and fruit; women with eggs and chickens. The chair coolies dropped us and our baggage at the bank of the river and returned home. The noise was terrific. The narrow space was crowded with passengers, sedan chairs, and men carrying burdens.

With Tung Tung Ko following, I walked across a narrow wooden gangplank to a small steam launch. Its open deck was

piled with baggage and crowded with passengers. I sat down on my baggage and the boat pushed out from the narrow inlet, and we were soon out in the big river, which was wide and rough. We went much faster than the other boats and passed one after another. Here was a further application of power.

I found myself beginning to have a dizzy feeling. I was tired anyway. So I just snuggled down among the bags and bundles and went to sleep. The next thing I knew I was waked by the whistle, and the boat stopped in the middle of the river near the city. It was now dark. The water reflected the lights in the buildings on shore and on a bridge above us. A group of sampans filled with yelling men approached us. They were the boats to take us ashore and the men to carry our baggage. Quickly all were hooked onto our launch and their people were swarming over us.

I was surprised to see that most of them were women, and to hear their loud voices. They were very different from us in their way of doing their hair: they fastened it at the back of their heads with a silver ring and wore in it three silver knives about a foot long. Their earrings dangled almost to their shoulders. They wore blue jackets and trousers, with a red sash about the waist, and were barefooted. Several of them grabbed hold of me and my baggage and shouted that we must hire their boats. They pulled me in various directions in a regular tug of war. Tung Tung Ko came to the rescue and selected one, and we fought our way through a howling mob to the railing. There the women helped me down into a sampan, and we pushed off.

Our boat had a woven bamboo cover arching over the middle half. I sat under it beside a small boy who was tied by a cord to prevent him from falling into the water. An old woman grasped the tiller at the end of the junk. She had the same dress as the other women but she had peculiar-shaped

shoes with sharp points. Another woman lighted three sticks of incense and placed them on the bamboo cover, where there was a piece of yellow paper with black characters on it.

Tung Tung Ko told me about them in our dialect, which they could not understand. He said they were called Tan Ren and were an ancient, uncivilized tribe who made their boats their homes and caught fish as means of gaining a livelihood. They worshiped the Queen of Heaven, whom grandmother had gone to consult before I went to Java. They were increasing rapidly and were scattered over the rivers of the coast provinces. People looked upon them as low wanderers and did not permit them to live on shore, while the Tan Ren did not venture to put themselves on an equality with other people, but remained confined to their boats, passing their whole lives without the pleasure of living on land.

At last we landed. Tung Tung Ko called a ricksha and sent me to the school. He went to a hotel. It was bright moonlight, and I looked with fascination at the wide streets and the brilliantly lit shops. The street led up a hill, and the lights of a great city lay spread out beneath me, with the river flowing darkly through its midst.

Soon we stopped at a gate. Beyond the wall rose splendid buildings, such as I remembered seeing in Hong Kong, the famous Christian college on one side, my high school on the other. This was to be my home for the next seven years.

The gateman brought me to the dormitory, where a senior girl put me in a large room with three other new girls. We spread out our bedding and went to bed. But not to sleep.

The moon was bright and shone into the room. I thought of home, the stiff-backed chairs arranged symmetrically along the walls of the reception room, the landscape painting hung on the wall between the two columns, the orchids that grandmother watered herself, my mother embroidering flowers on

the tips of shoes with different-colored silk threads, Orchid Blossom telling me what she had done in school that day. Suddenly a poem of Li Po came to mind:

> So bright a gleam on the foot of my bed—
> Could there have been a frost already?
> Lifting myself to look I found that it was moonlight,
> Sinking back again, I thought suddenly of home.

The clock struck eleven. That was terribly late for me. I stopped my dreaming and went to sleep.

III

Senior High

I WAS NOW in the city and enrolled as a student in senior high. The first problem for four of us new students from Kan San was dialect. Ours was quite different from the speech in the city in which my new school was located. It was not so much the words, but we used different tones, which gave a special singsong to our talk. This greatly amused the more sophisticated students from the big city. They made a collection of our most flagrant errors and whenever we came in sight would tease us by singing them at us, mimicking our tones. As a result I never dared to speak in any meeting in the school during the whole of my first semester there, and never even talked with the girls from the city if I could avoid it. It was not until my second year that I mastered their speech, indeed only another local dialect, sufficiently to use it without being self-conscious or attracting the attention and amusement of the other students.

One result of this was that it led the four of us—one was Hwa Nguk—to band together for mutual sympathy and companionship. We roomed together in a six-bed room, the other two being from a smaller place near ours and speaking much the same dialect. I wonder how much of what is usually considered as clannishness is due to situations of this sort and the need for self-protection against the ridicule of people from other places.

Another question was that of a school name. Nearly all of the girls had taken literary names suited to the higher level of studies in which we were now engaged. The four of us discussed this anxiously.

I was not satisfied with my name of Su Ling on two counts. First, Ling was really a little-girl name, so that Su Ling was sort of a hybrid of home and school. In the second place it had been given to me by the teacher, and I wanted one of my own choice.

The others had similar feelings. Hwa Nguk and her sisters had all been "pearls." She was Third Pearl. My third roommate was Bright Spring and her twin sister was Beautiful Spring. Bright Spring did not feel that this name at all fitted her new academic status. We all admired my fourth roommate, for all the girls of her generation had been given the name Princess and she was the Princess Philosopher. We agreed that nothing could be better.

After much leafing through the classics and my favorite poets I decided on Kwang Tsai, according to which I was registered. It means "Broadening Talents" and embodied my youthful aspirations and ideals. I thus progressed nomenclaturally from a mere number in a clan generation series to a name that was the symbol of a personality in my own right.

Most of my fellow students also took a Western name such as Florence or Rose. I did not like this. National feeling was running high at this time, and it seemed to many of us that our education and outlook were becoming too Western, particularly in this American mission school. We wanted to remain Chinese.

My new name had a drawback that I failed to anticipate. In my dialect it sounded fine, but in the national language then coming into general use in schools it had the same sound as the word for coffin. The older girls fell upon this with

whoops of delight. I tried to make a change, but too late. I was already registered, and my new name had gone into the hopper of school records and credit cards and could not be withdrawn. Thus I acquired the nickname of "Coffin" that was to stick to me for the next three years.

2

We four from Kan San kept together, took the same courses, and contrived to be in the same sections. At the opening of the second semester we participated in a successful student strike against a teacher whom the girls considered unfair and held partly to blame for the death of a student she had regularly flunked and who had referred poignantly to this in her suicide note.

Some of the older girls did not approve of this strike, for the girl had been a problem student and they were doubtful as to how much the teacher had really been to blame. So we were waited upon by a delegation of seniors.

"Listen, you four little devils," they told us severely, using our term for freshmen, or newcomers, which would have greatly edified our missionary teachers, had they known about it. "You'd better not gang up, and better be cautious about getting into serious matters you know nothing about."

This made us more wary, but by no means curbed our activity.

There was much less contact between students and teachers than in junior high, but two of the teachers, who came from our district, took a special interest in us and helped us to get accustomed to the life of the school and the city.

We had much more freedom and could go out every day between the hours of three and six in the afternoon. For this it was only necessary for us to sign the book in the gatehouse,

so we started in to explore the city. There was plenty for me to learn in this modernized port city; I had never seen telephones, running water, automobiles, or motion pictures.

There were many more ladies on the street than we had been accustomed to. They dressed much better. They were obviously more modern. Shoes with high heels were common. Indeed on our campus they were distinctly the thing, and no girl was considered really to belong until she had acquired a pair.

We had a school uniform consisting of a black skirt that came five inches from the floor, and a blue blouse. The girls wanted the skirts shorter, but the management of the school had very strict ideas as to dress. Once when a delegation of us were attending a city-wide meeting, the teacher who chaperoned us gave us a careful inspection just before we arrived at the meeting place and another girl and I were sent back because we were wearing bobbysocks instead of the regulation long black cotton stockings which we greatly disliked.

The rules of the school were strict and combined Confucian standards with the ideas of propriety of the unmarried women missionaries who ran it. However, we found very thrilling the Christian ideals of the equality of women which were held up to us, although we had only vague notions of what they meant in actual life, particularly in China. Hence we scrutinized the attitudes and actions of the missionaries and consciously or unconsciously modeled our lives on theirs. They were a strong-minded and energetic lot, and to one brought up in our languid and secluded woman's world, they were a seven days' wonder. I was even more interested in the young Chinese women of our faculty, all college graduates, and particularly those fabulous creatures who had actually studied in America.

Dormitory life was fun. During my time in junior high in our city I had lived at home, so that this was a new experience

for me and gave me much more of an opportunity to enter into the life of the school. My first year was busy with readjustments, particularly of dialect, and the exploration of my new environment in the city. By the end of my second year I had made sufficient progress so that I was elected secretary of the student association.

3

All the Christian schools marched to church. We liked to participate in the service with the large congregation of over a thousand, and listened with close attention to the scholarly preaching of the Chinese pastor, who was a doctor of philosophy from America.

There were more contacts between male and female than in my home city, and they were more natural and matter of course. However, the students of the boys' and girls' schools marched in and out, sat apart, and observed the other sex from afar.

The most exciting thing to me was the choir, for I liked music. We had had one in my home city, but this was different. These were men, not the schoolboys we had sung with previously. It was even rumored that at choir practice a girl might be spoken to by one of the men—that a girl might speak first to a man was beyond our wildest imaginings. Hence the choir was very popular and had a waiting list. This gave new zest to my work in music, to which I applied myself diligently so that during my second year I became a member of the choir.

We met for practice in a big room in the church. Girls gathered in one corner and men in another. Our anthems were more difficult and much more interesting than those I had sung before. But we especially liked the great hymns of the church.

A new union hymnal had just appeared, which eventually

became very popular and sold over a quarter-million copies. It had hymns of the early church, still used by Catholics, but largely overlooked by Protestants. There were Nestorian hymns—Nestorianism had once flourished widely throughout China. And of course there were the usual hymns of the Reformation and of the Protestant churches. But what we liked best was that there were sixty hymns with Chinese music, a number being recent compositions by living Chinese hymn writers, some of whom we knew. It made us feel that we were part of the world church and that we Chinese were making our contribution to it.

We wore robes of white with blue borders. These the men did not like, as they were originally designed by the women's college. This led to some little controversy, until the church settled the question by providing black robes which all considered most dignified.

I was always thrilled as we marched in solemn processional in the dim, lofty church, with the great congregation joining in the singing. I used to think back to the ancestral worship in our reception hall at home, and then to the Confucian temple. This was far larger and more impressive, and it seemed to me to have something that the others had lacked. It was for everybody, male and female, learned and illiterate. It was based, not on the blood relationship of the clan, but on a spiritual fellowship, a cosmic relationship to God. This was something new in China.

4

I was sixteen and had never spoken to a young person of the opposite sex except the cousins and brothers with whom I had grown up, and the prospective fiancé. At choir practice there was a tall young man at the end of the line. I glanced at

him out of the corners of my eyes. Our glances met. I did not dare look again. The next week I wondered whether he would remember. As soon as I dared, I looked. Our glances met. A thrill ran through me. Wonderful!

Later, some of us were comparing notes in a very confidential session, and a sophisticated senior boasted complacently:

"I now have three boy friends."

We looked at her with envy and admiration.

"Where do you meet them?"

"That is my secret, Coffin," she teased, "wouldn't you like to know?"

"What do you say to them?" said I, hoping to improve my technique.

"Oh, we've never spoken. We just look at each other."

When I observe the casual amours of the West, I wonder if the young people get half the romantic thrill that we did from those virginal contacts. They were primitive, but effective. A story was told of a couple who came to a minister to be married. As he questioned them he asked how they had gotten acquainted.

"We are not acquainted," they said, "we have just looked at each other."

Further inquiry indicated that they had had practically no opportunity even to talk to each other. The pastor suggested that they delay, and use his study for visiting together. But they could see no point in this. They, like the two in my junior high-school days, were sure. This was one reason for the failure of a considerable number of modern marriages. It took us quite a while to learn that romance needed to be supplemented by community of interests and a similarity of background and tastes.

But with us these new relationships were shy and tentative. It was more like acting in a play. We did not quite realize

that we were personally involved, for we still unconsciously held the traditional point of view that marriage was a matter to be determined by the family, not by the individual.

Sixth Brother was a sophomore in a government college and used to come and take me to movies or to the "Y" which had the only restaurant in the city that served foreign food, in which he was greatly interested. He did not know the names of the various dishes or how to order, however, and usually we dined on pancakes, of which we became very fond.

The movies were from Chinese studios in Shanghai and were largely historical. Our favorite actress was Butterfly Wu, who paraded gorgeous costumes. There was no kissing, but romance was nonetheless indicated, and opened more possibilities than we were able to imagine.

Sixth Brother was on the college basketball team, and as he was very sociable he liked to bring some of his teammates along and asked me to bring some of my friends, so I began to bring Hwa Nguk and some of the other girls from our home city. I never had any refusals, for Sixth Brother was tall and handsome. He walked with long strides, and was athletic and not so pale as most other students.

He was very much on his dignity with girls, but he had a critical eye and some positive ideas, at which we were secretly amused. Thus he held that our school uniform skirts were too long. We agreed but forbore to say so, and asked his reasons.

"It makes you too much denationalized," he argued. "Just like pictures of Chinese girls in the foreign concessions of Shanghai."

This was a new angle on feminine fashions. We were careful not to refer to the fact that women's skirts had been down to the ground in China for centuries. However, when the skirts of our school uniforms were revised upward the next

year, he felt that his judgment had been vindicated, and let us know it. He certainly had us there.

The new freedom for women resulted in changes in styles. It was all right for my mother to talk about walking without moving the skirt, for with her small feet she went about with short steps like a ballerina doing toe dancing. But with unbound feet and school athletics our stride lengthened, and the narrow skirts to which we had been accustomed became entirely too confining. So a new style appeared which slit the gown to the knee on one side, and a single silk-clad leg appeared. The results of this were so satisfactory that the next year the skirt was slit on both sides, and has remained so ever since. However, as women began to go out more and more, they were constantly stepping on their long gowns in getting in and out of street cars, buses, and motorcars, so the gown started its upward trend toward the knees.

This was not westernization, for Chinese women have stuck to their own style of clothing. It was an aspect of the new freedom, and to some extent a reversion to the more robust times of the Tang Dynasty, before the beginning of foot-binding, when it was recorded of Lady Ko Ko, the famous beauty to whom my father had been fond of comparing my mother, that she entered the palace gate on horseback.

On one of these occasions Third Brother, who was now a senior in college, came along. As my own brother, and six years older, he had been the big man among us children, so I was still somewhat in awe of him. This awe was now enhanced by the fact that he did not talk. But I saw him looking at Hwa Nguk.

He was the scholar of the family, and when he was present the conversation was apt to develop along literary lines. One of Sixth Brother's friends quoted a poem about a girl with bound feet. This started Third Brother off. He began by

criticizing the artificial aspects of classic prosody. Then he went on to decry the use of poetry to glorify the deformity of bound feet and to express his regret that a great poet had so prostituted his genius. He ended with a regular tirade.

"Away with all this preciosity about golden-lily feet, and all that sort of decadent artificiality," he declaimed. "Let us have some honest poetry about modern women who walk on natural feet."

There was a pause as he finished.

"Why don't you write that poem yourself for the next poetry contest?" asked Sixth Brother with cousinly malice.

We all laughed at the idea of what the ancient scholars of the old school who sponsored the contest and acted as judges would do with a poem like that. It would certainly get a sub-zero rating. But Sixth Brother was watching his elder brother sharply, and had noticed that he looked confused and had not joined in the laughter.

"I believe you have it already written," he said suddenly.

"I have," said my honest third brother, surprised into an admission he at once regretted.

"Read it."

"Let's have it."

Everybody talked at once until Third Brother gave in.

"Here it is, then," he said. "It is very brief." And he began to recite:

"Your feet are not the lotus feet
 That poets praised of yore,
But when they walk upon my heart
 They crush it all the more."

"But why so brief?" asked Sixth Brother gravely. "If Su had one verse for bound feet, certainly modern feet should rate at least two."

The laughter broke out again, but I noticed that Hwa Nguk was not joining in.

"The larger the feet the greater the coefficient of romance," said Sixth Brother. "Who has the largest feet?" he continued, turning to the girls. "She is the one to whom this verse is really addressed."

"I think it must be Hwa Nguk," said I mischievously, "since she is from the country."

Hwa Nguk blushed. Third Brother looked haughty and said nothing.

"When all is said and done, it is good verse. I hope it takes first place," Sixth Brother said handsomely. We all applauded. Third Brother unbent sufficiently to express his thanks.

Several times Sixth Brother brought with him the tall young man who sang in the choir. At first we were too shy for anything except an occasional glance, but we gradually became friends, although we never seemed to find anything to talk about.

It therefore came as a surprise when Hsu, the most feminine, not to say feline, of my three roommates, began to tease me about him.

"Coffin is the sly one," she said to the others at one of our midnight sessions for whispered confidences. "I saw her looking at him the very first time they sang in the choir, and how she does keep it up. Did you notice her this afternoon?"

This left me speechless, torn between indignation and doubt.

"She is falling in love, if you ask me," Hsu finished triumphantly.

I lay awake long after the others were sound asleep. Was Hsu right? Was I in love? Was this what it was like?

I had felt that I was not romantically inclined, although I did not forgo any opportunity of improving my knowledge

of the other sex. But I held firmly to the resolve that I had made back in my first days in junior high, and my ambition was still to become one of the glorious company of young women teachers. Nothing should be allowed to divert me from my objective of college graduation.

But now?

I was conscious of a thrill as I thought of it. A husband—this husband—a home, children. That led me to think of my first sister-in-law and of Second Sister. I compared their restricted, monotonous lives with my vision of myself as a high-school teacher, one of the new women of our new day in China, and romance gave way to ambition.

Either I was not in love, I decided, or if this was love it was not for me. It seemed far less dazzling than the daydreams I had so long cherished.

The next time the tall young man came with Sixth Brother, I found myself treating him with easy friendliness. He seemed to sense the difference, for I saw him looking curiously at me, and he came only once or twice afterward.

5

The summer following my second year in senior high started off badly. On the way home I narrowly escaped being kidnaped and got a terrible scare. Going over the mountains along with one of my schoolmates we were caught in a storm and the roads became too slippery for us to be carried, and we had to take refuge in a solitary farmstead. During the night the place was attacked by bandits, and only the alertness of the reliable chair coolies from Kan San that our family had sent to get us enabled us to escape into the stone guard tower and bar the heavy door before the bandits located us. Several of our schoolmates were not so fortunate and their families had to pay large sums to ransom them.

After the crowding and hurly-burly of dormitories and dining halls it was wonderful to be back among my own family, and I was content just to be a part of it. Everybody engaged in conversation—"wa-la, wa-la, wa-la"—all the women talking at once. Children ran in and out playing games and shouting at each other. Servants and slave girls went back and forth, serving tea and looking after everything. Dogs barked and babies cried. It was a peaceful family atmosphere.

By this time I had made my adjustments to the new conditions in senior high and the big city and was feeling quite the young lady, and regaled the female portion of our family with tales of our doings, to which they listened open-mouthed. But all this was too good to last.

One day First Brother asked me to have a talk with him in the reception hall. At this time both my uncles were away from home and he was the acting head of our branch of the clan.

He was now twenty-seven, and looked exactly like First Uncle, his father, with a big body and fat face. He even had the same booming voice and jovial manner. I had known him better when I was small, but for many years our relations had been on a formal basis in accordance with Confucian requirements, and I never took a seat in his presence, except at his invitation. As eldest son of the eldest son, he had a special position, and as I appeared before him, I thought of the passage from the classics: "The elder brother acts as a father. He must be kind to the younger brothers and sisters and the younger brothers and sisters must respect and obey him."

He politely asked me to be seated, and inquired about my year's work. Then he brought out a letter from the school reporting my marks and I knew I was in for it. He pointed out with his fan the place on my grade record where there was a red mark against the chemistry course. I had known that I would fail that course, for I hated the formulas and equations,

which seemed to me just so much nonsense. Then he became even more formal and serious as he pointed to my low mark in calligraphy.

"It is a shame that a Chinese cannot even write good Chinese characters," he said curtly.

I blushed and could make no answer, and he went on in his most impressive manner to pass sentence.

"Now what you have to do is to review your chemistry and practice writing every day during the summer vacation. Use this."

He handed me some five hundred sheets of white paper, and indicated that the interview was over. I did not dare to protest but arose, bowed to signify that I would obey, and left.

My mother kept me at my desk in my room from morning till night, and no visitor or playmate could approach me. The books, the writing brush, and the paper were my only company. Even at mealtime I could not leave, for my meals were served in my room by my slave girl. The fact that a similar incarceration had contributed in large measure to bringing about the death of my father did not seem to weigh with her at all. I was allowed out only to go to church.

The chemical formulas and equations interested me not at all for the first month. But I had no choice in the matter and saw I had two long months of work still ahead of me. So I began to think it over, and decided to make the best of it and master the stuff. So, word by word, I read the whole book over again and again. About the fourth or fifth time I got to like it and became really interested. Finally I found that every word and each symbol said something to me. It became a friend of mine. This was why I majored in chemistry when I went to college. Also, that fall, when the school's best calligraphy was placed on exhibition mine was included.

But it was a long, sad summer of discontent. First Brother

paid no further attention to me. However, I knew he would check up on the final result, so I had to keep at it.

6

One of the things that hit us hard financially at this time was another new law of the central government, stabilizing the currency and reserving the issuance of legal tender to the government. This outlawed our pawnshop currency. First Uncle had to redeem all pledges each month and also retire our currency, for which he had to use silver dollars. These were hard to get, and often had to be borrowed at higher interest than we had charged. This resulted in the closing of the pawnshop, which had really functioned as our own private bank and been a source of substantial profit.

During much of the summer Second Brother was seriously ill in the Christian hospital. During his convalescence he had long talks with one of the Christian doctors, who was very active in developing a church community program. Second Brother, who had been a rather nominal Christian, became greatly interested in this and became one of the doctor's closest associates in the church. Occasionally he confided in me and told me of his future ambitions.

My imprisonment was somewhat relaxed toward the end when it appeared that I was mastering my subjects, and Hwa Nguk was allowed to come to see me. She had had to drop out of school at the end of her first year of senior high because of lack of funds, and got a position in the schools of the city that brought her into our home as a parent-teacher visitor. Grandmother was so taken with her that she offered to lend her money to complete senior high, and Hwa Nguk was elated over the prospect of graduating.

By special dispensation I was permitted to attend the poetry

contest, for Third Brother regularly submitted poems and had taken a number of prizes, so I always went along with him to hear the leading poems read and see how he came out. When I happened to mention this to Hwa Nguk she asked shyly whether she could go along. It was easily arranged.

The poetry contest was like a relic out of the past, but was continued by the old-style scholars who had taken degrees in the imperial examinations that had been abolished some twenty years earlier. The same nine old scholars were on the platform, dressed in the same robes of office, and singing over what sounded to me like the same poems. Third Brother had three poems read and took three prizes. Hwa Nguk congratulated him very prettily and he was visibly pleased.

"Did you ever send in the poem you wrote about unbound feet?" she asked him shyly.

"Do you remember that?" he asked, looking at her as if he were seeing her for the first time.

"Yes," said Hwa Nguk. "And I haven't forgotten that Coffin here said it belonged to me because I had the biggest feet."

"These old scholars would have a fit if I sent in verse like that," said Third Brother, forgetting his shyness. "They would throw out everything I entered. I really prefer to write in modern fashion, but do this for practice."

"You ought to send Hwa Nguk that poem," I suggested.

"Would you like it?" asked Third Brother eagerly.

"Oh yes," said Hwa Nguk.

"You send her yours," I prompted, doing my good deed for the day, "she sends you hers in reply, you send her yours in reply—all in the classic tradition."

And so they did.

7

Change was going deeper. During vacations many of my schoolmates came to visit, and as time went on they more and more often teased me about what they considered my old-fashioned custom of bowing to grandmother.

At first I did not dare to mention this to her, but it finally became unbearable.

"It is not that I mean to be disrespectful," I told her, "but all the girls make fun of me."

With her usual practical good sense, she gave her permission. So the old Confucian formality, little by little, fell into disuse. Indeed grandmother herself gradually became more democratic and informal.

IV

Slave Girls Uprise

I RETURNED home following my graduation from senior high with Hsu, the roommate who was also from Kan San. During the term a new motor road had been completed and a bus line opened. We resolved to try it.

We first had to go down the river several miles by boat and then get our baggage ashore and onto the bus. This proved to be a complicated and trying operation. A horde of yelling baggage coolies rushed at us and seized various pieces of our luggage before we could do anything about it. We were running around frantically trying to get our things together when a young man whose uniform showed him to be a student from the neighboring university came up and politely offered his services. We accepted with alacrity and relief. He soon got our stuff together and onto the bus, which was already nearly full. However, he made some of the passengers move over and make place for us. We thanked him in our most dignified and ladylike manner. He raised his hat and found a seat for himself behind us.

This was our first trip on a bus. It seemed to be the same for practically all the other passengers. Here was another of the applications of power that were gradually modernizing our province.

As the crowded vehicle began to whizz along at what was to us a terrific rate of speed, many of the passengers became

more and more uneasy. Particularly a buxom young country woman facing me. I watched her with growing apprehension, for I was right in her line of fire. Our student noticed this, and just at this juncture he came and asked the man at the window to change places with the young woman so that she could get more air. It was not air she needed, however, for she promptly thrust her head out the window and parted with everything she had eaten. The student acknowledged our thanks with a broad grin, raised his hat, and returned to his seat. We soon reached Kan San, where our student once more looked after us.

A week or so later Hsu came to pay me a visit. She was all atwitter about the student. She had made discreet inquiries and it seemed that he actually lived in Kan San. She expressed her admiration for his courtesy and efficiency. I remember the thing that impressed her most was that he raised his hat in much the same polite manner that Charlie Chaplin did in one of the few foreign movies we had seen thus far. I had doubts about this. But there was no question but that he had made a great impression upon my little friend. It seemed he had smiled at her when he said goodbye. But she never saw him again.

The gossip that began to go around our city must have been a shock to her as it was to me, but she never mentioned the matter. It seemed that in his family there was a very pretty slave girl and both father and son fell in love with her. The grapevine reported that the father was about to make her his concubine when the son ran away with her and they got married. I have often wondered how that affected the relations between father and son. Doubtless the latter counted on this being one of the things that the father could not acknowledge without losing face and therefore would have to overlook.

This was the first of a number of incidents that threw our

city into considerable excitement. The runaway marriage greatly disconcerted many of our gentry families and caused a great deal of talk, both among them and their slave girls.

In the thinking of the gentry it had always been taken for granted that a certain number of slave girls would run away or commit suicide, and this was to be expected in the ordinary course of events. They had not taken seriously the recent law of the central government forbidding slavery, and had merely written them down in contracts as adopted daughters instead of slave girls and had gone on much as before. But these new developments began to give the law a greater significance.

The next incidents of this sort were two weddings of slave girls in our own family, and both under unusual circumstances.

The first was that of Azalea, one of our younger slave girls, who was sent to night school in accordance with the new compulsory education law. She was a demure little thing, but very intelligent and quick at her lessons. The teacher fell in love with her and sent one of the other teachers to ask her in marriage.

Grandmother was taken aback.

"Hah . . ." she snorted. "Never heard of such a thing. Does your young friend not know that there are regular methods of handling matters of this sort? Why does he act like this?"

"It is not just a question of marrying any girl," said the middleman stoutly. "He wants to marry this particular girl. How else could he take it up?"

"That is so," said grandmother, mollified, and paused to think it over. Then she handed down her decision.

"He has done the direct thing. I will do the same. Tell him to come in person tomorrow."

The next day the teacher appeared before her as she sat in her big chair in the reception hall. She looked at him for a long time as he stood motionless and respectful before her.

"So you wish to marry my adopted daughter Azalea?" she asked at length.

He bowed.

"But does she wish to marry you?"

He bowed again. "Lao Tai Tai, I have reason to believe that she does."

"Hah . . . no doubt," said grandmother with the grimace that passed with her for a smile. "No doubt you do . . . hah. But I will ask the girl herself.

"Call her," she ordered over her shoulder.

Soon the girl appeared, gave a startled glance at the young man, and cast her eyes down in confusion. Grandmother gazed at her for a long moment and her old face seemed to soften.

"This young man says he wants to marry you."

"Yes, Lao Tai Tai," said the girl.

"Do you want to marry him?"

There was a pause. Then the girl looked up at her.

"Yes, Lao Tai Tai," she said clearly.

"Hah . . ." snorted grandmother, shaking her head. "Never heard of such a thing. Has this generation no sense of modesty?"

She turned to the young man. "When?" she demanded.

"Very soon, if Lao Tai Tai agrees."

"So be it," she settled the matter. "Send your middleman around to discuss details."

They were married very simply in the schoolhouse a few weeks later, and this was for some time the chief topic of conversation in our woman's world throughout the city. Particularly among slave girls. The comments of ours were probably typical.

"Lao Tai Tai tells the daughters in her own family what man they are to marry, and they marry him, and here this slave girl tells Lao Tai Tai what man she wants to marry and gets away with it."

"Just like marrying into an official family," said others, impressed by the fact that the groom was a teacher in a government school and the wedding had been in the schoolhouse.

The second such marriage was one arranged by our family for one of our slave girls to a young man in a Christian home. This was a Christian wedding, held in the church and conducted in semi-Western fashion. I went with my mother and my two aunts and other members of our household to the home of a Bible woman to dress the bride, and one of the things that made the greatest impression was that she went out the front door, just like a daughter of the house, instead of out the back door as did the slave girls who were married from our residence. She even had a long white bridal veil, loaned to her by one of the teachers in the Christian girls' school.

It was this veil that capped the climax for both weddings. When the bride trailed its shimmering length down the aisle of the church to the sound of the wedding march she was followed by a subdued chorus of "Ai-ya's" that echoed through our city for days.

"I once saw a picture of a veil like that in a Shanghai newspaper," said one of our slave girls in an awed voice.

The thing that impressed the slave girls most was that it was possible for one of themselves to have a modern wedding of this sort. It added greatly to their feeling of self-respect and realization of a new democratic status. The Christian church with its girls' school with Chinese women as principal and teachers presented new possibilities. The Christian ideal of home and marriage made a great appeal, exemplified and implemented in concrete form by this marriage. It added a new dignity to their future.

About one in five of the slave girls in our clan and among our relations got some schooling. Several spent a number of years in high school, some became nurses and teachers, one

went to the university. Most were over school age or couldn't profit by it, but all were affected by the new spirit that was abroad. Those who had achieved education, like Orchid Blossom, or a more exalted matrimonial status became the idols and heroines of the rest. Against this background, things that had for centuries been taken for granted began to appear in a new light. Questions began to be raised and a feeling of restlessness developed. It was somewhat intangible, and was less evident in a strict and well-ordered household like ours where, under my grandmother's efficient, kindly management, everything went smoothly. But in other households, where there was more cause for discontent, the feeling grew.

2

One day the banging of a gong in the street announced the approach of the town crier, and cook and Orchid Blossom went out to the gate to listen.

"It is a notice of a meeting of slave girls called by the official of our ward of the city," they reported. "All families are ordered to make sure that their slave girls attend."

This was received with incredulity.

"You must be mistaken," the other slave girls assured them. "Who ever heard of slave girls attending a meeting?"

But Third Aunt confirmed it. There had recently been some flagrant cases of mistreatment of slave girls, and the officials had decided to do something to enforce the new law.

Our ladies were of two minds about this, but the slave girls were unanimous.

"No use in our attending," they said. "We have nothing to complain of."

But grandmother saw it differently.

"We have nothing to conceal," she said. "Everyone put on

her best, so as to make a good show. I will inspect you before you leave."

And at the appointed time our entire contingent went timidly forth, holding hands, for they seldom went out the gate. Orchid Blossom, as the best-educated, took the lead.

Meanwhile Kiu Kung had been out to inquire. He reported that there had been two cases that had aroused special indignation. One was a girl who was ill-treated and not given enough to eat, so she began to steal and when the mistress caught her at it she burned her fingers and her body with a hot iron and then had her put out in the street. The girl was found by a Taoist layman, who took her to a hospital. When she recovered she was sent to an orphanage. As the husband was a high official the wife was not punished. The other was a girl who drowned herself in the well because the mistress punished her for stealing food.

Third Aunt said that this family was in deathly fear of the ghost of the girl, for the spirit of an unmarried girl who kills herself is considered especially virulent, and had paid a beggar a large sum of money to step over the coffin and walk away so that the spirit of the girl would follow him and leave the family in peace.

"If they had spent half of that money in feeding the girl properly, she would still be alive," said my mother indignantly.

It was dark before our slave girls returned and went in to report to grandmother, where they all talked at once.

It seemed there had been over a hundred slave girls present. The officials had told them about the new law against slavery, and that they were ready to help them, and not to be afraid to complain to the police if they were mistreated. Then they had asked whether any of them had complaints to make.

No one had said a word. Even after repeated exhortations by the officials. So they had finally called on one of the two

girls who had originally come to complain and asked her to stand up and tell her story. Here Orchid Blossom took up the tale.

"This girl stood up and said her master beat her frequently with anything that he happened to have in his hand. Then the official told her to show them, and she began to weep, and showed where her head had a number of big sores where the hair had come out. It made us weep too," Orchid Blossom concluded.

Kiu Kung told us later that this man had found it expedient to leave the city, and the girl was sent by the officials to an industrial school in Amoy where she could learn a handicraft. He also found that two girls from the family of one of our relatives had been among those who had gone to complain and after going to the police had run away but found no place to go and finally had to come back, but were treated considerably better afterward. Mother and grandmother sympathized with the girls, for this was a family which they visited often, and from which they never returned without making adverse comment on the way those girls were overworked.

This disturbed the gentry families, and a number of them began to marry their slave girls off and replace them by servants. Our family was less affected and most of our slave girls preferred to stay on until the regular age of marriage. Grandmother took the position that it added to the prestige and dignity of a family like ours to have a number of young women as slave girls rather than a few servants who would be more efficient. However, times were changing and eventually we, too, decided that it would be better to bring this institution to an end. Suitable marriages were arranged, although some of the girls were still very young. Our family now has no slave girls.

V

College Life

MY YEARS in high school and college passed with little to distinguish one from the other, and there is little to report concerning them. The great changes they made in my life came at the beginning, and after that it was largely a matter of further progress.

In the daily chapel talks in college it was impressed upon us that we were a highly privileged group and had a corresponding obligation of service to our country, all the more so as there were so few of us, China having in the late nineteen-thirties some fifty thousand college students, against a million and a quarter in America, which had only one-third of our population. In particular, we were constantly reminded of the great need for the technical contribution we were being trained to make. For me this confirmed and intensified my ambition to become a high-school teacher of science and do my part in building the new China.

Outside of this, my chief interest at first was in the little circle of friends, of which Sixth Brother and some of his college mates were a part.

Girls found Sixth Brother's combination of virility with almost effeminate good looks fascinating. It amused me to watch their reactions, particularly those of my two roommates Lyn and Hsu, who became regular members of our Saturday afternoon movie group, with Hwa Nguk coming along when she thought Third Brother might be there.

Lyn was a substitute on the freshman basketball team and played a good game of tennis, and that gave them a good topic of conversation. This did not please Hsu, who would watch for an opening and deftly take over the talk, leaving Lyn puzzled and disconcerted. Sixth Brother did not appear to be aware of these maneuvers, as he was of a romantic turn and responded automatically to Hsu's big eyes and feminine wiles.

The two girls were an interesting contrast. Lyn was a product of the new educational atmosphere. She was honest and without artifice, and more like a good-looking boy, yet her complete naturalness only served to lay bare a basic femininity that was somehow most appealing. Hsu, on the other hand, with her powder and paint, her pretty affectations, and her feminine tricks of the trade, did not advance beyond the feline —even after allowance is made for a feline factor in this appraisal of her.

One week Sixth Brother's letter to me included a note for Lyn, which I gave her. She brought it to me a little later with a hurt look in her eyes.

"Read this," she said, handing it to me. "What a queer person your brother is to write to me this way."

I glanced through it. It was a very ordinary letter in a rather stilted style—it had to be, for letters were censored by the school.

"What about it?" I inquired to draw her out.

"Why should he bring a formal written document into what is merely a pleasant acquaintance?" she asked. "It is not proper."

"Lots of students do it," said I.

"But it is not proper," she repeated. "Letters are things to be exchanged between the two families, and he is taking a great deal for granted in assuming that things have gotten to that stage."

She blushed and broke off, then handed me the letter.

"Please return it to him," she said, and that Saturday she refused to go along to the usual movie.

Hsu was happy to have him to herself and sparkled and cooed, but I could sense an undercurrent in my brother's efforts to play up to her.

When we were alone I gave him the note and told him of our conversation. "Grandmother would not like this business of your writing letters to girls," I warned him. "Things of that sort are family matters, and she will resent your taking into your own hands things that ought properly to be left to your elders."

"Pooh," said Sixth airily. "You women are all alike. You hear wedding bells every time a man even looks at you."

I objected indignantly, and he went on more seriously:

"Please tell her that this is merely friendship on paper and that I mean nothing improper. If we were together I would say it. When we are apart and I think of something, I just put it down. What is wrong with that? Snap out of the eighteenth century, both of you."

When I explained this to Lyn she seemed very ready to accept his explanation and agreed rather doubtfully to receive his letters, and I found a little later that she was replying to them. But she kept all this strictly to herself, even from me, and I learned of it only through my brother. However, I noticed that she was working hard to improve her game of tennis and soon afterward made the team. I also noticed that she and Hsu were not getting on. When one went with us on Saturdays, the other would make some excuse.

Hsu likewise was attending to business in her own way. When our class put on a play, she sent my brother a ticket, so that he attended as her guest, and Lyn went around for a week looking as if she wanted to cry, but saying nothing.

Then brother made the mistake of branching out in his correspondence and wrote a letter to Hsu, who was much elated and showed it triumphantly to all our roommates.

"See," she said, "I have a love letter from Coffin's brother."

That was too much for Lyn, and indeed for the rest of those in our room, who were disgusted with Hsu's bad taste in flaunting it, and who knew nothing of the letters Lyn had been getting, as they were always enclosed in mine. Lyn took his latest letter—which I think was number eighteen, as brother was very methodical—cut the corner off it, and sent it back without a reply. This meant in Chinese practice that she cut off all relationship with him. After this she would not see him, or even open his letters, but merely asked me to return them. When, at his request, I tried to expostulate with her on this drastic action, she cut me short bitterly.

"I thought that this was our own personal and intimate correspondence, that it belonged to me. For him to write to Hsu is like taking an epistolary concubine. Now let's say no more about it."

And there the matter rested.

A couple of months later, on the first of April, to be exact, Sixth Brother was working in the chemistry laboratory trying to complete a long and difficult series of analyses. One of his classmates, knowing of the correspondence, but not of the latest developments, got hold of an envelope addressed to brother in Lyn's writing and brought it to him as an April fool trick. Sixth Brother took it eagerly, and when he found it empty was so overcome with disappointment and anger that he threw his retorts on the floor and smashed the whole thing, so that the long process had to be begun over again. His classmate considered that his joke had been a hilarious success and later told it to me in great detail. Sixth was too chagrined to speak of it.

At my first opportunity for a secret talk I told Lyn all about it. She merely thanked me and said nothing, but the next Saturday she came around with elaborate casualness.

"Do you suppose your brother would mind if I went along this afternoon?" she asked.

I told her I thought he wouldn't.

When Sixth saw us come into the lobby he gave her one long look, and then they did not look at each other again until our meal was over after the movie.

"I think I will take Lyn home, if you two do not mind," he said briskly, and Lyn got up meekly to follow him.

Hsu changed from ours to another room the following semester.

However, the matter had still to be cleared with the family, and Sixth was very apprehensive as to how grandmother would look upon his taking matters into his own hands. If she should choose to view it as a usurpation of her authority there would be trouble. Whenever there was an opportunity he confided these worries to me, asking me what I thought grandmother would do, and begging me to help. This I readily agreed to do, but that had to be put off until we could all be together in Kan San.

2

During my senior year, writing love notes in blood was all the rage. A girl would tie a thread tightly around a finger end, prick it, and quickly write a character or two pledging undying affection. This she would send to a girl friend, who would then reciprocate. All the girls tried it. My particular chum proposed that we exchange pledges but insisted that this be exclusive. Our friendship broke up over this, for I was more gregarious and had a number of other good friends, whom I had no

mind to give up. So I sent her a single character in my blood —*hun,* meaning "hate." She capped this with two characters, "extreme hate," and thereafter we did not speak. However, as our graduation approached we began to feel that this was silly, and renewed our friendship.

This was largely fad, but the blood symbolized a background of tragedy. We all knew the story of one of our college students a few years earlier. She had jilted the boy from her home town whom she had promised to marry, although there had been no formal, family-arranged betrothal. He had cut off a joint of his finger and sent it to her, and then had run away from school and entered a famous Buddhist monastery on a near-by mountain. When our class visited this monastery, a teacher who had known him pointed him out to us—a bloodless, emaciated figure of tragedy in a marching line of monks chanting sutras, his eyes fixed on the ground.

This made a deep impression on all of us. It was a glimpse into the mystery of the thing called love which had the power to seize two individuals and bind them together, in contrast to the clan contract that married off two people who had never seen each other.

It is pleasant to record that when this girl married her new love she drew a particularly vindictive mother-in-law who made her life miserable.

There must be something here that goes deep into Chinese character, for one of the treasures of this monastery, which they showed us with pride, was a Buddhist sutra that a pious monk had copied, centuries earlier, in his own blood.

3

Our college had a strong religious emphasis, and most of the girls were Christians. I was in agreement with this but had

my own ideas about it, and continued to adopt such aspects of Christianity as were congenial to my own needs. I was primarily interested in personal religion and very little in the institutional side, whether church or mission. This I had in common with a large majority of Chinese Christians, and in my case it was accentuated by my dislike of certain missionaries and of some of the mission ways of doing things. I sang alto in the choir and was in the back row and could slip out during the sermon without being noticed. I got into the way of doing this when the sermon did not interest me, for our scholarly pastor was often away.

The one who made the greatest contribution to my Christian faith was my American missionary science professor. She was a brilliant and effective teacher and all her courses were eagerly elected. With her, religion and science interlocked and each gave depth to the other. These were the two enthusiasms of her life, and she linked them naturally and unaffectedly and shared them with us. She was always taking some of us with her on walks and was never too busy to welcome us singly or collectively. She answered all my questions and gave my faith a more solid foundation. I think of her always with affection and gratitude. She was my spiritual mother.

4

During my senior year I served on the church committee for receiving new members. A considerable number of students became Christians and joined the church each year, and they liked to have a student on the committee to bring the college into actual participation in the work of the church.

One of those who appeared before our committee seeking church membership was a tall, elderly man whose clothes had once been good but were now the worse for wear. When the

pastor asked him to tell how he had come to believe in Christianity and why he wanted to join the church, he related a strange story that led to no little controversy in our committee.

He was a contractor, and when the government program of widening certain streets had necessitated cutting off the fronts of a number of houses, he had been engaged by a widow, a member of our church, who had decided to add some modern features while she was at it. The chief of these had been a bathroom, with a porcelain *kang*, yellow on the outside, with birds and bamboo in bas-relief, and green on the inside, that made a good bathtub, and a small white enamel washbasin attached to the wall, with faucets for hot and cold water that were not connected as there was no running water. However, both tub and basin actually had drain pipes which, when the plugs were pulled, allowed the dirty water to run off. This was considered the last word in ultramodern equipment and was exhibited by the widow with pardonable pride to all her friends, none of whom failed to remark on her enterprise in having everything in readiness for the installation of running water whenever our city might put in a city waterworks, of which there were occasional rumors. I saw it and made the same remark myself.

One of the members of the family, returning from Java while all this was in process, was aghast at the widow's extravagance and took it out on the contractor.

This resulted in a row that continued over several months, so that the contractor received less than had originally been agreed upon. He felt that he had been most unjustly treated and hit on a plan to get even.

The widow began the use of her new bathroom with a pride and pleasure that was gradually clouded over. Every now and then when she was in the bathroom something would pinch her. She paid little attention at first. Then as it continued she

began to think her imagination was playing her tricks. But it got worse. Then she found faint black and blue marks on her skin and began to get really worried. When she stayed out of the bathroom for a few days nothing happened. When she went back it began again. So she started to search for the cause, but with little success.

However, she noticed that this usually took place when she was at the washbasin, so she began a minute examination of the wall behind her. This was faced, to the height of the window sill, with slabs of stone that had been whitewashed. It seemed to her that one of these looked different and, scraping the whitewash off, she uncovered a hand, larger than life-size, its fingers outspread, crudely but realistically cut in the stone.

It was this hand which had been pinching her.

She took prompt measures. Sending for a carpenter, she had him get a big iron nail and drive it with a sledge right through the palm of the hand.

She was not pinched again. But the hand began to whisper and whistle at night. This frightened her, for she did not know what new, nefarious forms of retaliation the hand might be meditating. So she had it taken out nail and all. Then she began to search through the house for other signs of black magic and in another room uncovered a stone that had seven heads cut in it. She remembered that of five members of her family in Java, three had died in a little over a year, and had this stone removed at once.

Of course all of this got around and was widely discussed. I heard of it myself, and went with several of my fellow students, and saw the two stones lying face upward in the back yard, the hand with the nail still in it, as it was believed that seven days under sun and dew would destroy their evil potency.

This ruined the contractor's business, for no one dared to

have him do any building for them. Then, several months later, he began to have trouble with his right hand. It got sore and began to stiffen and he almost lost the use of it.

No one had ventured to tell him of all these circumstances, but he began to think that he had better go to the widow and confess, and see whether some unforeseen development had in some unknown way affected his hand.

He told our church committee that he had walked past the house several times before he could get up his courage to go in and confess to the widow and brave the loss of face and other consequences that might ensue. When he finally did so, he was horrified to have the widow accuse him of causing the death of the three members of her family in Java. She took him out and showed him the stone with the seven heads. He stoutly denied having anything to do with this, but no one believed him.

Seeing that he was totally at a loss what to do, the widow and some of his friends who were Christians admonished him that he must not merely repent but must turn his back once and for all on the forces of evil, and the surest way was to become a Christian. This he had resolved to do.

So ended his recital, and as we looked at his haggard face none of us on the committee could doubt his sincerity. But what action to take was something else again.

When the contractor had gone, the discussion began.

"I believe that the church should register its condemnation of this sort of superstition," said the younger missionary on the committee, who had the reputation of being very up-to-date. "We must make that clear. I am not in favor of basing church action on fictitious tales like this."

I nodded my agreement.

"I am a science major," I told them. "All of this is just the kind of superstition that is holding our people back and must

be gotten rid of. I am not in favor of the church paying any attention to it."

But the elderly missionary on the committee surprised me by going to the heart of the matter with a homely practicality.

"We should consider the man himself," she said with gentle simplicity. "We do not have to understand all his heathen ways. Only that he has repented and turned to our Lord Jesus Christ, and seeks admission to the fellowship of this church. I am in favor of receiving him and giving him all the help we can."

Our Chinese pastor nodded vigorously, and when the discussion had gone on for some time longer, he summed up. He was a doctor of philosophy of a famous American university and was always listened to with respect.

"There are two kinds of facts here," he told us, "first what actually happened and second what the widow and the contractor think has happened. These must be dealt with separately. We here are primarily concerned with the spiritual and moral reactions of the contractor."

He paused and looked us over with a smile.

"The church does not have to decide whether the hand pinched the widow or the nail injured the contractor. Perhaps the widow had some hallucinations, or the contractor had been brooding over the loss of his business. I don't know. But the question before us is the contractor, who has done wrong and repented, and now seeks the help of God and of the fellowship of this church. I have talked with him at great length and wish to recommend to you that he be received."

"We must deal with people where they are," said the elderly missionary gently. "I move we admit him."

And so it was voted.

"I still don't entirely like this," I told the pastor after the committee adjourned. "It looks too much like a recognition of the powers of darkness."

He grinned. "I seem to remember that you told me once that you are still afraid of ghosts."

I blushed.

"It is like this," he went on more seriously. "I feel that we ought to give much more attention and study to this aspect of Chinese life. The American missionaries come from an environment where this sort of thing has largely disappeared, and do not have the background to understand it, or disregard it as mere superstition. They do not realize. But the early church had exorcists as part of its priesthood for many centuries. We need to perform that function in China today."

"You sound as if you believe in demons as much as I do," I told him with a touch of malice.

"That is not the question," he said quietly. "The gospel speaks of delivering men from the fear of death. It is like that with the fear of demons. It is a man's own attitude of fear that we seek to fortify him against. Whether it is fear of an actual demon or one in his imagination is beside the point."

5

The central government was seeking to develop citizenship as a basis for more democracy. The method was mass education, and all students were required to help. The first step was the reduction of illiteracy. Women were included in this, and here we girl students had a special responsibility. Also a special difficulty, for most women could not come out to attend classes and we had to go to them in their homes.

My first assignment as a sophomore was in a middle-class home at the edge of town, where I had three pupils—a grandmother, a daughter-in-law, and a girl of eighteen. I arrived each day at four o'clock and stayed until half past five. For the first half of the period they gave their whole attention to study. Then they had to take up household tasks, and we would

adjourn to the kitchen, where I would help in cutting up vegetables or in other work while I went on teaching. The eagerness of all three left nothing to be desired, but the older woman simply could not master the Chinese written characters, although she had a better grasp of what we were trying to teach about citizenship than did the two younger ones. The final examination was along strictly academic lines, and she flunked hopelessly, whereby I lost a lot of face, as only two-thirds of my pupils passed. This seemed a very inadequate and uphill process, but we went into it with enthusiasm and in the aggregate it counted up, for this was going on in hundreds of homes in the capital city. Elsewhere, however, literacy among women made little progress due to the scarcity of girl students as teachers.

During my junior year, Japan invaded China and war came. However, it only gradually spread to our southern province. The spring of my last year the government mobilized all senior high and college students in a campaign to rouse the people to national resistance. Our studies were speeded up and by the first of April we were in barracks for six weeks of training. We lived a Spartan life and were under rigid military discipline, our movements being ordered by blasts of a bugle, with severe penalties for the slightest tardiness. Much of this seemed senseless to us, as when we were allowed only three minutes to finish a meal. Most of us were in a constant state of apprehension, and a number of the girls got sick.

I was assigned to the dramatic section, where we were drilled in simple dramatizations of Japanese oppression and barbarity and the patriotic reactions of resistance. We were also taught to explain the national situation to the people and to answer their questions.

This was followed by four and a half months of field work, our team going from village to village, where the entire population turned out to see our show. I played men's parts. We all

threw ourselves into the campaign with the greatest enthusiasm and the people responded accordingly. Our teams were made up of students speaking the same dialect and were sent where they would be best understood. But our drama was so simple and elemental that the crowds got the meaning even if they could not understand what we said.

This was an education for us also. We had not realized before how far China had to go to achieve democracy based upon an informed citizenship. We were asked ridiculous questions. Many thought that Japan was a part of China and that this was just another civil war. They had little knowledge of national government or national affairs. Indeed most of them did not seem to care. The agelong custom was that this was the business of the Emperor in Peking. Government traditionally descended from above. There was little, if any, national spirit. But there were things still more disconcerting.

"All that you say is very reasonable," we were told over and over again. "We agree with you, but our local government does not work that way."

Then followed stories of bribes to local officials to avoid conscription, and tales of extortion in the collection of taxes. It made us feel sick. Where could better officials for all these countless localities come from, we asked each other. But meanwhile we had a war on our hands and had to do the best we could.

We were required to make reports, and our team put all these things in. But from what we learned later, the director to whom our reports went wanted to make a good showing to impress his immediate superior, so he omitted the unfavorable reactions that would cast doubt on the success of his work, and his superior preparing a report for the one next higher up did more of the same, so that by the time it reached the top everything was lovely.

6

The problem of democracy in China is a stubborn and difficult one. There are three factors involved—three incommensurables, like three parts from three jigsaw puzzles that will not fit together: first, the clan; second, the inherited structure of the centralized empire; third, the modern, democratic, national state.

First, the clan. The Confucian system, with the clan as its basis, is a rationalization of the New Stone Age type of social organization, set up in China perhaps six thousand years ago. It has been perpetuated into our modern day, and still retains much of its original vitality and power because of its close conformity to the most basic of human relationships and instincts.

There has been much written in the West extolling the democracy of the Chinese big family. The Confucian system is not democratic. The five relations are between superiors and inferiors. The three most important are based on seniority, as between older and younger generations, or between older and younger in the same generation. There is much in the way of family solidarity, mutual responsibility, and general give and take, but the rigid requirements of filial piety give final authority to the seniors. This is family-ocracy, to use the term of a Chinese writer, not democracy.

Second, the inherited structure of the centralized empire, established 221 B.C. and lasting to 1912, still provides the political framework of China, for its political habits and organization carry over, in large part, into the present. Under this system, the government extended downward only as far as the county. The rest was left to the clans.

Probably no country in the world was governed with so small a ratio of officials to population. This was because the objective of government was simply the maintenance of dy-

nastic control, centered in the capital where the imperial court, the ministries of the central government, and the central military establishment were located. This objective involved two functions for the government from the provincial to the county levels—collection of revenue, and maintenance of garrisons sufficient to stamp out any uprising that might threaten the dynastic security.

Thus a small ship of state sailed the vast sea of a population that included a quarter of the human race.

Clan and imperial court each had its own objectives, largely unrelated, but not in conflict. Each was intent on its own. This left areas uncovered by either government or clan. The long arm of the central government reached down and the hand of the clan reached up. But not only did the hands fail to clasp, there was a gap between them. It was this gap—between clan self-interest and dynastic self-interest—that left the way open for war lords and bandits.

Third, the Republic of China, established in 1912. Democratic government in the West is based on locality, the unit being ward, village, or township. It includes all the individuals in each unit. The Republic of China has sought to follow the Western pattern.

But Chinese society is based on kinship structure, the unit being the clan or one of its branches. A distinguished Chinese writer states that the Chinese parallel to the United States of America is the united clans of China.

Therefore these three do not fit together. Clan interests conflict with modern self-government at the local level. There is a traditional gap between locality and the government at the county level.

The exceptions are the cities, where some notable progress has been made, and some smaller centers where officials with training and experience have been available. But the

influence of the new democratic methods has not generally extended much beyond these centers themselves, and soon reaches the vanishing point. There, clan, bandit, and war lord took over. China is eighty-five percent rural.

So we found the patriotism the government was trying so hard to teach the masses did not get across to the new local officials who were the ones in actual contact with the people. This was in part because there were no precedents for government at this level. Neither officials nor people grasped the problem involved. Each continued along the old lines that failed to meet the present situation.

Nonetheless and in spite of everything, China continued to resist and we had our part in it. Indeed, I was to have a larger and far more personal part in it than I had any idea of at this time.

PART FIVE

The Wide, Wide World

DEMOCRACY *brings with it new duties of citizenship and personal responsibility for government. Individual freedom has fascinating possibilities, but cuts me off from clan solidarity and support and leaves me isolated and lonely in a wide, wide world. Yet this is compensated for by romance, and by the building of a home and a life together in which I am an equal partner.*

II

Public Life

A LITTLE over a year after graduating from college I was unexpectedly transposed from the make-believe of dramatic propaganda to the reality of public life. I became principal of my old junior high school in Kan San. When I stood for the first time before the student body as the new principal it was one of the great moments of my life. I was two persons that day, one the little girl of ten years before looking with incredulous awe at the Chinese young lady teachers and resolving to become like them, and the other the head of all these young ladies whom I had so much admired. It had a dreamlike quality that I could not at first shake off. It was hard to realize that I was the same person. It came about in this way.

Due to time out for war work, my college class graduated in the middle of our fifth year, and I went to my old junior high that spring to teach science. This gave me a feeling of deep satisfaction.

The principal was in poor health. She was the first Chinese appointed to that position, which she had now held for eighteen years. She had wished to resign earlier, but none of the teachers, although excellent classroom instructors, seemed able to assume the administrative burden. The war had brought additional outside activities and inside problems, and she began to call more and more on me to help deal with them,

and I soon became the assistant principal. Then her health gave way and she proposed that I succeed her as principal.

I was then twenty-three and was afraid to accept. This was no mere matter of dramatics or the colorful ceremonial of the good old days, but of clear analysis of problems and prompt and correct decisions which, moreover, would be subject to the scrutiny and criticism of students and faculty, and, indeed, of the whole city.

So the principal went to grandmother and after a long talk convinced her. She argued that I was already carrying much of her work, that I knew the school from the inside as a former student, and that many of the gentry who were on the board of directors were relatives or members of families into which we had regularly intermarried.

Grandmother encouraged me to accept. I was confident I could do it, but was not at all sure that the others concerned would think so. Therefore I proposed that the principal continue to hold the title and let me do the work. But she declined, and although I tried to insist, it did no good. So the board of directors officially appointed me and I took over.

I entered with great enthusiasm on this new work, which I looked upon as one of the most important aspects of building the new China. Education in 1937, when Japan attacked in earnest, was making a great advance. Schools had been getting better and enrollments increasing. There were monthly meetings of principals, city-wide meetings of teachers, and conferences with government officials and inspectors who had great plans for a modern educational program. In spite of war conditions we still tried to push ahead.

My position, first as assistant principal, then as principal, gave me a semiofficial status, as I was included in all official functions, and brought me into the public life of the city.

Since the literati had traditionally been the leaders of China,

we principals to a certain extent took their place, although we were not officials and did not represent powerful clans but held our positions on a basis of professional qualifications. However, our principals' association influenced government actions more than once, and was usually successful in opposing policies that were unfavorable to the public interest as we saw it. It would be a bold official who would venture to override the combined sentiment of all the school administrations. This was largely because of the prestige of schools and scholars with the public, for there is no country in the world where learning is more highly valued than in China.

I was thus a junior member of the new professional class that was arising in our city as everywhere. In this class the emphasis had changed sharply from the purely literary and scholastic activities exemplified by the poetry contest that had been the chief enthusiasm of the older literati, to a preoccupation with sociology, political organization, and national strength. Our schools had a new curriculum to train citizens for an emerging democracy which was still a thing of the future although in process of achievement.

Third Brother had returned to our city when he finished college and was now a teacher in a new junior high school founded by a rich merchant from Java who wished to do something for his native city. The poetry contest was now a thing of the past, and the building where it used to be held had been turned over to this school. I went there with Third to visit it. He took me to a room where a class was studying general science.

"Some change, eh?" he said with his quiet smile. "Would you recognize this as the room where we used to hold the poetry contest?"

It was certainly a far cry from the old-style degree men in their brocade gowns singing over the stilted poetry of a thou-

sand years ago, to the modern school with the children quietly studying science and English.

A significant part in this advance was taken by the Christian group in our city—principals of the Christian schools, doctors and nurses from the Christian hospital, pastors and social workers. Our Christian institutions were more fortunate in the matter of trained professional personnel than the other institutions in our city, due to the wise policy followed by the missions of establishing Christian colleges in China and of sending students abroad for advanced study. This Christian group was large and active and often met to discuss their contribution to Chinese society and social welfare. This tended to center in a broader church program, and Second Brother and his friends persuaded me to become chairman of the church finance committee.

Orchid Blossom was now a graduate nurse in the Christian hospital, and she was a member of this group. She had finished junior high several years after I did, and made a good record. We had hoped she might be able to go on to senior high in the capital city, but this proved impossible. All this time she had continued in our family and been treated as if she were really my sister, her tuition and other expenses being provided by mother. The cost of this was comparatively little in our city, but in senior high it was much more than our limited resources of that day could bear. So she took the three years' course in the nurses' training school in the Christian hospital in Kan San.

There were other changes. Our household was much smaller. Kiu Kung had died during my last year in college. All our slave girls were gone. All had done well. Jem Po, for example, had been married for several years to one of our prosperous tenant farmers and occasionally came for a visit with her two children. She was even more stately than I had remembered, and more independent. Grandmother told me

that a number of Third Uncle's friends had asked for her, and she could have been a concubine in any one of a number of wealthy homes. At Third Uncle's insistence, grandmother had finally told her of some of these offers. But she would have none of them.

"I don't like the way these men look at me," she told grandmother. "I would rather have you pick out a good honest man for me."

In the administration of the school I got a new appreciation of the contribution of the American missionaries. The setting hen was still there, a little older, but diligent and devoted as ever, and I came to value her ability and her self-effacing spirit. But much as I came to admire the zeal and earnestness of the missionaries—for it was to them that we owed the Christian schools, churches, hospitals, and social work—I could not help wishing that they had more knowledge of, and took more interest in, Chinese culture, and how to fit the Christianity they were so active in promoting into the fabric of Chinese life.

After I became principal, there was some question of closing the school in connection with a policy of concentration on fewer and better schools which a number of the missions were advocating. I opposed it. Such schools, in spite of their limitations, make a unique contribution because they penetrate the interior, get down to the grass roots of contemporary Chinese culture, and come into close touch with the people. It was this school with its modest standards and inadequate equipment that, for me, opened the door to a new world. No later experience had the same thrill and stimulus.

2

The government was making an effort to eradicate superstition, and sought to expose the witches and mediums in our

city and the surrounding villages. It was said that there was a medium in every village, and about twenty in our city.

A team was appointed to visit these places and secure evidence concerning their superstitious practices. One of my friends was on the team, and as I was specially interested, I went along a time or two. In the first place the attendant informed us that the medium was busy and could not be disturbed. We waited for a while and then got impatient and made our way in where a woman was answering questions for an earlier comer. As soon as she saw us she brought things to a close, saying that the spirit had departed. In the next place the medium inquired as to what we wanted and asked a number of questions, then went into a trance and remained silent for fifteen minutes. This woman later became a Christian and when I recognized her at church I persuaded her to tell about her methods. She said that the technique was to remain silent after getting the visitors started talking about what they wanted. During this period she listened intently and they often engaged in a certain amount of conversation. In this way she was able to pick up clues on which to base her answers.

The third was a more pretentious establishment, with the unusual name of Mother Pig. It had a bad reputation and my mother did not want me to go. However I borrowed the clothes of one of our servants and wore her shoes, and our new Malay cook went along with me. The women in this place were gaudily dressed and painted and greeted us with large gestures and exaggerated politeness. One of the team was a very pretty girl and they concentrated on her, suggesting that she learn how to do what they did and come to live an easy life.

We were particularly anxious to see a wizard who was reported to cut off the tip of his tongue and restore it un-

harmed, and were finally told by a woman medium where to find him. He was in a small room where there was a Buddhist shrine. The wizard lighted incense and candles, repeated his incantations, and bowed before the Buddha. He then seized a long sword and cut off the tip of his tongue, which he placed in a dish on a shelf behind the Buddha. This was rapidly done and he made no move to show us the portion cut off, but as he continued his incantations, one of us quietly slipped up beside him and seized the dish. It held a small piece of lean meat. When we confronted him with this he was greatly embarrassed and lost a tremendous amount of face. He insisted, however, that the master under whom he had studied could really do it but that he had not yet progressed that far. We later learned that he had given up this work and had become a wandering Taoist priest.

The team found it impossible to secure legal evidence that would be of use to the government, and the eradication of superstition came to be left to the slower process of the new education, with its science readers, its laboratories, and its wider outlook.

3

The central government took the lead in developing a highway system. This was a tremendous undertaking, for until very recently in our part of China we had had no wheeled vehicles, and could travel five hundred miles to the west without crossing a single road on which it was possible to drive a motorcar. Second Brother was for a while an official in the provincial highways bureau, and I was able to learn firsthand of their success in building a stretch of road where it would get the heaviest traffic and then granting bus and trucking monopolies for an advance payment sufficient to

build the next section. This did as much as anything else to change conditions in our province. Instead of spending a day to travel thirty miles, we did it in an hour.

This had an unexpected effect on our family fortunes. Grandmother's attention had been attracted to a nephew in one of the other branches of our clan in the city who showed ability but did not like studies, so she lent him three hundred dollars to start him in business. He was the first to see the possibilities of the newly developed rapid transportation. Before the advent of good roads and motor trucks, fresh fish and other sea food could come by boat only as far as our city. What could not be sold there for immediate consumption had to be salted and packed and then transported by the usual slow methods.

He made our city the first stage in a network of rapid distribution, set up a system of merchandising, and in a short time had over a thousand employees. He not only saved the cost of drying, salting, and packing the fish, but he got a much higher price for the fresh fish he was able to deliver over a wider area. This largely put our family fish market out of business and cut off a considerable part of our remaining income. We should have become his partners but he had earlier formed an association with the Chen family into which Second Sister had married, and they opposed our being included. However, although this nephew and his associates were very successful for a while and made a lot of money, he was too ambitious, and the outbreak of the war caught him badly overextended, with the result that he lost practically everything and was back where he began when grandmother loaned him the three hundred. But that did not restore our fish market business.

The Government was also pushing bandit suppression, seeking to bring order to the outlying portions of our district.

I got firsthand evidence of this when I had occasion to make a trip. On our return the bus broke down and we had to go by truck. We crowded in wherever we could get a place to sit, and at once began to be conscious of a horrible smell. Some of the men investigated and found that it emanated from a bundle in the rear that was wrapped in banana leaves. When the leaves were pushed apart it was found to contain two human heads. The men's startled exclamations brought the rest of us around in a hurry. The heads looked worse than they smelled, and several of our party became violently sick. One of our group protested to the truck driver.

"What is the object of carrying things like that?" he demanded indignantly.

"Those heads are worth good money," replied the driver. "They are the heads of two bandits with a price on them, and are being taken to the capital to claim the reward from the government."

"But we can't ride with objects like those," we objected. "It will make us all sick."

"Don't worry," said the driver reassuringly. "We'll leave the smell behind when we once get going. Hop in now."

"Well, anyway, there are two bandits less," remarked one of the party philosophically as we started and the air began to clear a bit.

"There are plenty more bandits," said the driver.

4

I am thankful to have had a personal share in the attempt of the central government to put China on its feet. It was the impossible task of making the transition in one generation and for one fourth of the human race, from the New Stone Age type of organization of the clan and village to a

modern state. What we were able to accomplish was inevitably too little and too slow. Indeed we were allowed a scant ten years, and my part was cut short by the Japanese invasion of our province when my first year was barely over.

In education, highways, restoration of order, we made progress—I could mention other lines, but confine myself to those of which I had personal experience. To writers and officials from the West who had little or no background and judged us by their own standards, our situation seemed terrible, and we got from them a flood of criticism and a trickle of help. In spite of all difficulties we were moving forward. It is this that gives me a basis of optimism for the future progress of my people when they have opportunity. The Japanese saw more clearly, and it was this progress that alarmed them and led them to strike before we could get too strong for them.

Our chief difficulty was lack of trained personnel, especially in government. We also lacked experience. This was luridly illustrated in the case of our new district magistrate. We looked forward with hope to his coming, for he was a military officer with a reputation for efficiency and discipline.

One of his first moves was a campaign to suppress opium smoking. Here was one place where a great advance had already been made, although much remained to be done in our province as in some others.

About a month after he had taken office, the new official ordered all principals, together with representatives of the teachers and student body, to meet at the Dead Chicken Field, as our execution ground outside the west gate was called. When we got there and lined up we found that the occasion was the execution of a number of opium addicts, the idea of the official being that this would be a good way of bringing home the heinousness of opium smoking.

This caused immediate objection on the part of all teachers, who did not consider it good method and were sure that it would frighten the children greatly. Those from government schools were not in a position to say anything to the magistrate, for he was their employer and superior, and they could not properly do so; and before the rest of us could get together it was too late.

The first to be executed was clearly an addict, with gray, emaciated face, and near the point of death. He was led up with a soldier on each side, and made to kneel down with his back to us. The official barked an order. A soldier with a pistol stepped up behind him and shot him through the back of the head. His body slumped forward. We all winced and a murmur arose in opposition to any more of this. But before we could make any move the next victim was led up. He was a young farmer, who was dragged forward, weeping and protesting at the top of his voice.

"Look at me," he shouted. "Do I look like an opium smoker? Look at my face. See how strong I am. I am being wrongly accused."

The soldiers paid no attention but dragged him, struggling and shouting, toward the place of execution. This was too much, and all of us, students and teachers together, broke ranks and rushed up to intervene. The official seeing this gave an order, and the man was shot in the back of the head as he wept and struggled, with us crowding all around him. A wail went up from students and teachers alike. A number were sick. Many of the rest burst out crying. Several of us went to the official and insisted that the remaining executions be called off, which was done.

At the meeting of the principals and other administrators of the four Christian schools that week, this matter was indignantly discussed. We learned that the official had been only

a minor military officer and knew little of civil administration but wanted to show his authority and naturally used the rough and ruthless methods of the military camp, which were certainly not adapted to the problems with which he had to deal. How he had gotten the appointment as district magistrate we did not find out. Perhaps through the influence of some war lord who wanted his support in our territory. Perhaps through political connections. Perhaps merely due to the lack of anyone better qualified.

It was agreed that a protest ought to be made, and a letter to the provisional authorities was drafted and signed. This was reported at the next meeting of the principals of all schools in the city, and the principals of all other private schools added their signatures to our letter. The principals of the government schools could not co-operate openly, as they were under the magistrate and it would be an act of insubordination which would put them in an embarrassing situation with the government.

"You go ahead," they told us. "We can not properly sign with you, but you will have our full moral backing."

This letter made a formal protest on two counts. The first was the execution of these unfortunates, for whom, we felt, some remedial action would have been better; the second was the forced attendance of the schools. We wanted to say something about the young farmer being shot, but had no way of getting evidence and so had to leave it out.

The provincial authorities removed the official. He was given the customary farewell banquet, which we attended in our official capacity. All the usual polite sentiments proper to such occasions were expressed in the traditional polite manner. But the official was more realistic.

"I have been your magistrate only three months," he stated. "My leaving is due to the activities of some of you here"—

he paused and looked pointedly at me and the other private school principals, "who sent a letter of accusation to the provincial government. I announced that I was going to suppress opium smoking and I always aim to keep my word. You may object to my methods, but my intentions were sincere."

We gave him credit for sincerity and good intentions but felt that more than these were necessary for a modern government.

The next magistrate was not much better, and I soon came to look back on this with some misgivings. I questioned whether we had much more experience than he did. I wondered whether it would have been possible to find some way to co-operate with him rather than take the easier way of impeaching him. Perhaps we were all just blundering along together on a basis of trial and error. But what else could we do except to do the best we could?

In fact we had a succession of officials. Some were incapable relatives of officials higher up. Most had good intentions but did not know how to deal with the complex problems we had to face. This was in part due to the very small number of officials under the empire, so that men with experience were scarce.

But in addition to lack of training for government, the fact that practically none of these officials could speak our local dialect cut them off from the people they governed and from an exact knowledge of the situations they had to deal with. This situation prevailed only in the three provinces along the south coast. Ours was one of the worst and was said to have some hundred and seventy dialects—six were spoken within a radius of fifteen miles from Kan San. Schools put great emphasis on Mandarin, as the national language, but this reached only a small fraction of the population and was a slow process at best.

In considering China the Western observer will be well advised to take into account two other aspects of the situation, one historical, one contemporary. Similar disturbed conditions—often worse—have obtained from time immemorial, but the Chinese people have nonetheless managed to achieve a balance that has enabled them to maintain the continuity of Chinese culture for forty centuries, and the Chinese Empire has held together for twenty-one centuries, and made more progress than is usually realized.

Or, to survey the contemporary scene as of 1935, before Japan attacked in force: compare China, four hundred and fifty million people with one written language, one culture, and a tradition of political unity going back twenty-one centuries, with Europe, where a population of similar size is split by ancient animosities into twenty-five warring languages, cultures, and nations. China produces war lords, bandits, and famine. Europe produces world wars. China is in no position to boast. This is merely by way of putting China into the perspective of the world picture as a whole.

5

Apart from such misgivings I found this active life completely satisfying, and in comparison was inclined to look somewhat indulgently on the personal problems of friends and brothers, although I could not help being involved.

During the previous vacation Lyn had come often to see me but as usual was very shy about saying anything as to her love affair with Sixth Brother. She still seemed to have much of the feeling that this really should be a family matter rather than an individual one.

Sixth Brother was now teaching biology in a government school in a neighboring city, and was thinking of marriage.

He felt sure that Lyn was willing, but could not get her to go beyond saying that his family would have to ask for her in the traditional manner.

So he came to me to get my help in presenting the matter to grandmother.

"Go and talk to her yourself," I teased him. "You take pride in being modern, now handle this in the modern manner."

"I may be modern," he said uneasily. "But how modern is grandmother? Will she think that I am being impertinent in wanting to choose my own wife instead of leaving it to her?"

Now I knew that grandmother had taken an immediate liking to Lyn on her visits to me, and told Sixth so. "I even heard her make a remark to mother about Lyn, a while ago."

"What did she say?" asked Sixth anxiously.

"She said, 'Now if we could get a daughter-in-law like that, I would like it,'" I told him.

Sixth was delighted, but still uneasy. "You talk to her," he begged. "This is women's business, and I wouldn't know how to handle it."

When I went in to talk with grandmother, I saw Sixth going to his old listening post, where he could overhear what grandmother said.

"Just like old times," I teased.

Sixth managed a sickly grin.

But when it came to putting the matter direct to grandmother, my courage failed. Suppose she should refuse. So I talked around the subject and finally reminded her of what she had said about Lyn.

"I still think that she would make a good daughter-in-law," she said. "But will Sixth think so? Your younger generation is very difficult. It is hard to tell what to do."

She thought a while.

"He must have had a chance to see her when you were all together in school?" she asked.

"Yes, grandmother," I admitted cautiously.

"Then, do you think that he would be willing if someone should make a move along these lines?" she inquired anxiously.

"If I am any judge of such things, he would," I assured her demurely.

"Well," she said with a sigh, "let's see what we can do."

Sixth was elated, but still inclined to caution.

"Let us both go and see Pastor Fang, right now," he said. "And ask him to act as middleman. Grandmother has great confidence in him as pastor of the church. He will know how to handle this."

He did, and the matter was soon settled, except for one thing.

"We know that her personality is satisfactory," said my canny grandmother. "But how about her training and habits?"

So she invited the girl to attend a tutorial class in Chinese literature for a couple of weeks as a guest in our house, where all of us fell in love with her.

So the engagement was announced, and Lyn stopped coming to see me until after her wedding, which took place near the end of the summer. Her marriage was a successful and happy one. Later in the year she returned for the customary visit to her family, and came to see me. Marriage had done something to her. Her shyness was gone, and replaced by a charming air of assurance that led her to pour out one confidence after another.

"You know," she finished rapturously, "I think that my husband is the handsomest man that I have ever seen."

Which was not so bad for a girl who never talked much.

6

Hwa Nguk finished senior high and came to teach in the primary school attached to our old junior high, at the same time that I became its principal. Third Brother at once resumed his friendship with her.

But the only place that he could see her was in the school, where she both lived and worked, and the students there were even more interested in romance than in my day, so Third Brother and Hwa Nguk had to snatch at what opportunities they could get for a bit of conversation away from prying eyes. This so much embarrassed my very shy third brother that it threatened to end their romance, which, however, they eked out by correspondence and by meetings at various church functions. Hwa Nguk came from a Christian family, and Third had joined the church with the rest of us, and had not said a word in protest over our loss of clan funds in consequence, but was rather a nominal Christian. He now began to take an increased interest. There were not only the regular services, where he could look at Hwa Nguk sitting on the women's side of the church, but a mixed Bible class which was very popular in that it brought both sexes together. Still better was the recently opened social club, which had a couple of rooms in the church building and met a real need as a place where young people could come together to play games, sing, or just talk.

But this still did not help Third Brother much because of his extreme shyness. Finally one of my cousins intervened with an offer to Third Brother that she serve as go-between, and so an engagement was agreed upon, subject to the approval of the two families. Here my mother took a line that surprised us all.

"Times are changing," she said. "We have no more slave

girls and little money for servants, and I have no training in handling a household with only one or two. I have only the one son, and it will be better to have a clever daughter-in-law from a poor family who will know how to get on."

Grandmother needed no convincing.

So they were married and lived happily. Hwa Nguk proved as clever at managing the house and making clothes for the family as my mother had expected.

"She knows how to do everything," she often said in praising her.

III

We Become Refugees

TOWARD THE end of my first year as principal, the tides of war at last reached our more remote interior district.

It began with bombing of our cities. My school went on a wartime schedule. Classes in mathematics and science, which required blackboards and apparatus, were held from five to seven in the morning. Then we trekked to the neighboring hills where we had foxholes, nine girls to a hole. Each had a writing board suspended from a cord about her neck, and a small satchel for books and lunch. So school was carried on outdoors, except for rainy or quite cloudy days, when we could stay home.

This went on for some months until new Japanese landings took place on the coast, not far from Kan San. Neighboring places were bombed and looted. People were killed and women mistreated. Schools closed. This precipitated a frantic exodus and it was decided that the women and children of our household must take refuge in the country.

The question at once arose as to the safest place to go. We had no lack of choice.

The first to come with an invitation was Nung Nung, the former tea boy of our old family school, now prosperous and reputed to be more wealthy than we.

"Lao Tai Tai," he said formally to grandmother, "come

and stay with us as long as you wish. We know exactly how you like things and will provide for you just as if you were in your own home."

Following the closing of our family school after the death of our old teacher, the tea boy had been given a position in one of our shops, where his mother was also a servant. Here he was so useful and intelligent that First Uncle took him along on trips to Java as a confidential servant to check on the loading and transfer of goods. He admired First Uncle greatly and watched him in everything and imitated him. Then he began business ventures of his own, first loaning money at usury, at which he proved himself very shrewd and made fat profits, then buying into a rubber plantation. On his first return from Java, uncle sent for the mother and paid her Nung Nung's accumulated wages, which she used to buy him a wife. On his second return he was married. On his third he built a big house.

Grandmother was touched by the concern of her former servant and thanked him more graciously than was her wont, but refused his offer, as she considered that his home was not far enough away from the city to be safe.

Several of our former slave girls came with similar invitations. The first was Jem Po.

"Ours is only a humble country home," she said. "But it will be a safe place for you, and we shall be happy to serve you again."

Grandmother had the same answer for all.

"We can't tell where these invaders will come, and no place is entirely safe. If they come where I am, I am too old and fat to run away so I will just have to stay and be killed. It is better for me to be with my own clan, for then my own relatives can bury me."

In China this is an unanswerable argument.

2

So we took refuge with our own clan in Ma To, about fifteen miles from Kan San, just at the edge of the mountains. Travel was a new experience for my mother, for in all her life she had never been out of our little city. She caused great amusement among the chair bearers by asking them what the vegetable was in the fields everywhere, for she had never seen rice growing. The change disturbed her but little. She continued her placid pattern of sleep, embroidery, calligraphy, and poetry interspersed with Bible reading.

3

The village of Ma To was at the upper end of a valley, with the houses extending up the slopes that were too high to be irrigated. We stayed with our sixth uncle, who was really a distant cousin of my father and one of the important members of the clan.

Each of the main households had a stone guard tower with the lower part for storage and the upper loopholed for defense against bandits. The house where we stayed had two. In addition, our clan had a larger one, a sort of fort on the hill above our part of the village.

I knew by heart the story of the beginning of our clan in this province, but this was my first personal contact with the village of Ma To, its headquarters. The first member of our clan in this part of China had come here over four centuries ago. The village was at that time made up of the clan of Ma, and our ancestor had settled on a plot of uncultivated land at the outskirts. I saw what was said to be the original house in which he had lived. It was small and dark. The population was then much less, and only the floor of the valley below

the village was under cultivation. He began to terrace the gentle slopes above and alongside the village and eventually had a larger acreage of rice fields than the original clan. This had necessitated diverting water from the main stream for the irrigation of our rice fields and had involved many clan fights over water rights. Many times crops had been burned and clansmen injured and sometimes killed.

Our clan had become more wealthy than the original one. This was largely due to the fact that the Ma's stayed at home in their village while we spread to the city and overseas. Indeed at this time nearly half of the men between twenty and forty were in Malaya and Java. Most of our houses were of red brick, whereas those of the Ma's were largely of pounded earth. Ours were also different in being two storeys high, although they were Chinese, not foreign, in type.

The chief evidence of our wealth, however, was the clan ancestral temple—the grand central temple of our clan as a whole, whether living in Ma To, Kan San, the other two villages, or the South Seas. Here was the main ceremonial hall where the worship of all our clan ancestors was conducted. This was a lofty and spacious structure with pillars much larger than those of our reception hall. Indeed it was nearly as large as the Confucian temple in Kan San and was embellished with latticework and carvings in wood and stone that had cost a great deal of money, largely provided by overseas members. Here was our clan school. Here were the genealogical records of the entire clan for four centuries.

I was much impressed with the way in which these records were kept and how at the new year the roster of births, marriages, deaths, degrees and official position, was carefully brought up to date. I found the records of our own branch complete and accurate. The Chinese people have a deep feeling for the importance of kinship structure as the basis of

society. This goes back for centuries and will not easily be eradicated.

In the ancestral temple were facilities for banquets where a thousand of us—that is of the men, with the women serving them—could sit down at the same time, for nothing in China becomes official until it is sanctified by a feast. The trend in Confucianism has been away from its primitive religious observances and in the direction of a humanistic point of view. The Confucian philosopher Hsun Tzu, who lived two centuries before the Christian era, held that the chief importance of ancestor worship was in bringing the clan together and cementing its solidarity. Hence the emphasis on ceremonials and feasts.

4

I was there at the spring festival known as Tsing Ming. This was the time for the renovation of graves and the worship of ancestors, both at the graves and in the ancestral hall. Each branch of the clan sent representatives to the annual meeting held at that time.

In the long history of our clan none but men had ever attended this meeting. However, as the first woman in the clan to get a college degree, it was felt that I was qualified and I was therefore invited to participate, which I did. As a Christian, however, I was excused from the ancestor worship at the temple that preceded the meeting, or rather nothing was said about it one way or the other, it being tacitly taken for granted.

Perhaps the run-in that Second Brother had with Sze Pa Kung, the head of our clan, over the matter of his cutting off our income from clan funds when we became Christians, had something to do with it. We learned long afterward

that the idea had been to put pressure on us and they had never imagined that we would value our new religion more than this large income. Our continued adherence to Christianity had been a matter of puzzlement to them, but had gradually gained their respect.

After Second Brother's graduation from the law college and appointment to an important official position, Sze Pa Kung had become more and more worried about his arbitrary action in cutting off our funds. He knew perfectly well that he had no legal basis for this and that Second Brother would find it out in the course of his studies. Second Brother had found out all right, and had done some talking about it, which had no doubt been circulated. So, when he escorted us when we went to Ma To as refugees, the two inevitably came face to face, and the head of the clan thought it was better for him to take the initiative and bring the matter up.

"I hope that you recognize the justice of my ruling on the matter of your family's share in the funds of the clan," he said blandly to Second Brother, after the polite preliminaries and exchange of compliments had been completed.

"I am sure, sir," replied my brother respectfully, "that you did what you considered best and right, but I deeply regret that I cannot agree with you as to its legality and must most respectfully request you to permit me to differ with you."

Second Brother told me about this later with great gusto.

"This was pretty plain talk to the old gentleman from a youngster like me," he said with a grin, "and he started to tell me to be more respectful. Then it occurred to him that he had no legal ground to stand on and he just shut up."

The upshot of the matter was that Second Brother maneuvered him into bringing the question before grandmother for a final decision as to what line we should take. This was

a very bitter pill for his dignity and prestige, for it was one thing for him to browbeat grandmother when she had not been able to help herself and something quite different for him to bring the question before a woman and accept her final decision.

Second Brother acted as master of ceremonies and carried it off with great dignity and no little relish. At first he left the more ceremonious polite observances to his two elders. When grandmother gave him his cue, he opened up.

"The honorable head of our clan has been good enough to come today to explain to you that he was legally in the wrong when he deprived our family of our share of the clan income when we became Christians," he stated with bland courtesy.

The lean, cruel face of Sze Pa Kung turned pale with anger and his thin white beard jutted out truculently, for such a blunt statement involved a terrific loss of face for him, and yet there was nothing he could say in reply.

Grandmother looked on benignly.

"With your permission, venerable sir," she said quietly, "I am about to suggest that these sentiments—with which I may say . . . hah . . . that I fully agree—be, so to speak, kept strictly and confidentially within the circle of those of us who are now here. In a word, that we agree to forget the whole matter."

We all looked at her with amazement, particularly the head of the clan.

"What did you say?" he asked incredulously.

"You know we Christians are taught forgiveness," she said simply. "I am proposing that we forget the whole matter."

The face of Sze Pa Kung became almost human.

"That is extremely good of you," he said courteously.

Then he turned to Second Brother.

"What does the law have to say?" he inquired.

"I will follow grandmother's lead," said Second Brother earnestly, "and give you the text of the sermon we heard in the Christian church last Sunday. 'We are no longer under the law, but under grace.'"

The head of the clan looked at him uncertainly. "I don't think I quite understand," he said.

"I mean that we will do as grandmother says," said my brother earnestly, "and if you do not understand our Christian position, I shall be glad to talk with you about it."

Sze Pa Kung bowed. "I shall be happy to accept your offer," he said, "and to talk with you later about your Christian point of view, which I must say I deeply appreciate."

When Second Brother returned from escorting him to the outer gate, he found grandmother smiling quietly to herself. He advanced and formally made her a profound bow.

"My sincere congratulations," he said, smiling back at her.

"Merely good sense and courtesy," said the old lady. "We are here as the guests of the clan. There are many people counting on those funds. Probably all whose turn comes within the next ten years have their plans all made as to just how they will spend this extra money. If we should insist on our payment now, it would throw all those plans into confusion and antagonize everybody. They would all fight it. And think what a pleasant time we would have here as refugees."

5

As the Japanese dominance of our province became more complete, conditions became worse. Our home in Kan San

was looted, along with several of our shops. Grandmother took all these misfortunes philosophically.

"Each person has his own measure of happiness," she would say. "Perhaps ours is now used up."

I had to make a number of trips back and forth and several times barely missed being robbed. On one trip I was not so lucky. A party of us were traveling together, which afforded some protection. As we came to a bridge over a small stream we saw a number of soldiers in green uniforms, two of whom stood sentinel, one on each side of the narrow bridge.

These were some of the green-uniformed soldiers who had been attacked and driven out by the peasant uprising several years earlier, and had escaped and reverted to their earlier status of bandits, but found it convenient to retain their ragged uniforms and masquerade as soldiers.

As the first of our party started to cross, they suddenly lowered their rifles with crossed bayonets in front of him and brought him to an abrupt halt. A third soldier pointed to a pile of clothing and baggage on our side of the bridge.

"Pile your belongings there," he ordered curtly.

"You do not need to search us," objected one of our fellow travelers. "We are peaceful civilians and our papers are in good order."

"Do as you are ordered, and at once," said the soldier shortly. "This is not a search. You are making a contribution."

Reluctantly the travelers began to deposit their baggage on the pile.

"Your clothes too," ordered the soldier again, "and hurry."

The men were stripped to the buff. Women were allowed to retain their underwear, but clothes, jewelry, hair ornaments, and handbags all went into the pile. They even insisted on taking the glasses of one elderly man.

"But I cannot see to walk without them," he moaned, "you must let me have them back, or I shall just have to stay here with you." After a good deal of argument he finally got them back.

"Now cross the bridge one by one," the soldier ordered, "and make your selection from the things in that pile. You see we are considerate. But one garment only."

I had never seen such a collection of ragged and dirty cheap clothing. I couldn't see a single gown I could bear to put on, and finally picked out a man's coarse cotton gown that seemed a little cleaner than the rest.

This experience clinched my decision to go to Free China and cast my lot with the war of resistance. Grandmother was dubious about this.

"I am afraid to have you go so far away in wartime," she said. "You will be cut off from us, and when you run out of money you will have to become the concubine of some rich man in order to live. I hear that girls from families like ours have done just that. I would consider it a disgrace if that should happen to you."

I laughed at her fears.

"Not I, grandmother. I am not like the old-style girl who always has to depend on some man for her livelihood. I can make my own way. I am a college graduate and a chemistry major. I can get work in a commercial laboratory or in a hospital. I can teach chemistry in high school. I have had experience in school administration and have been a high school principal. You do not have to worry about me."

So she gave her consent, and when I was ready to leave I went in to bid her goodbye.

As I looked about the bare, unfamiliar room, the picture of the home of my childhood flashed before me—the tempestuous play and shouting of children sweeping through its courts and

passageways, the women all talking at once—"wa-la, wa-la, wa-la"—the servants and slave girls going back and forth waiting on us and serving tea, the dogs barking and the babies crying. I heard it echoing to the big jovial voice of First Uncle. I felt again the sunny, somnolent atmosphere of long afternoons in our family school with the desiccated figure of our venerable teacher bolt upright at his desk and the students shouting their lessons. I entered again the peaceful twilight where my mother passed her days.

It was all gone. Grandmother sat here on a hard bench, with a single, plainly dressed servant standing behind her. Our home had been bombed and looted. Her slave girls were gone—Jem Po, Summer Lotus, all the rest. Black Dragon and the little gray monkey, too, had long since gone the way of all the earth. Only grandmother was unchanged. She sat there, fat, fixed, and indomitable as ever.

Yet in one respect there had been a change. She had mellowed with the years, as the strain of governing our big household and outside interests had lessened, and her inner kindliness, which I had always known was there, had sometimes come to the surface—but not so often as to prevent our household, including mother, from being still in fear of her.

With her usual practicality she inquired minutely as to my travel plans and equipment. Then she handed me one of our locally made paper umbrellas with a large wooden handle.

"This is my parting gift," she said. "I want you to keep it carefully. It will be useful to you. See?"

She unscrewed the handle and, with the unaccustomed grimace that passed with her for a smile, held it up to show me that it had been hollowed out and filled with small gold bars.

"Keep this for emergencies," she said, screwing it up tightly. "Use it only as a last resort."

I took it in both hands. Then stepped back and bowed. The formality of bowing had largely fallen into disuse with us, but I fell back on it now and was glad of the Confucian formality that made words unnecessary. She dismissed me with a wave of her hand.

I never saw her again.

The hardest thing was leaving my mother. She was a sad person, the more so in these strange surroundings. We parted with tears.

Thus I became a part of the great migration in which many millions of my people fled from their homes in Japanese-occupied territory to Free China, there to continue our resistance until the war should be won.

III

Romance

MY JOURNEY to Free China took more than a month of travel on overcrowded buses, with long delays to get reservations. I did not mind the hardship, for all this was experience and I was seeing new places and meeting new people. Finally I came to the famous city of Chengtu, known as "Little Peking," where four refugee Christian universities had come together on the campus of the fifth, which was located there.

I soon got a part-time teaching position in a refugee Christian high school near by. They didn't have even part of a room for me, and I sought in vain for a place to stay until a friend who was a student in the graduate school of theology on an adjoining campus told me there was a vacant room in their women's dormitory. So I registered as a special student. This had far-reaching consequences. I had long wanted to learn more of Christianity and was glad of the opportunity for further study. At the end of the year the dean suggested that I continue and take my master's degree, which I did. It was his subsequent recommendation that opened the way to the scholarship for study in America.

All my classes were coeducational, which was a new experience, and left me uncertain just how to get on with the men students who were all about me.

One class was taught by an American professor who lec-

tured in English. This gave us a great deal of trouble in taking notes fast enough to keep up with him.

I noticed one student who seemed to have more difficulty than the rest and who labored stubbornly, with frowning concentration. His name was Han. He was easily the most handsome of my fellow students, with a delicate and sensitive face that mirrored his emotions. It was an honest face in which shyness alternated with a sense of humor. Outside I occasionally saw him talking with other students with great animation. This, however, he seemed to shed when he entered our classroom.

During the winter he wore a Chinese long gown, which was much more warm and comfortable in our unheated classrooms, but although some students had dressed in this fashion in my home province, I felt it rather strange, for most men students dressed in Western style or wore school uniforms that were very similar.

This gave him a certain old-fashioned air, which was enhanced by his habit of quoting the Confucian classics to clinch his point in class discussions. I, too, knew most of these references and realized that he had an excellent classical training, which I highly respected.

But all this was more than counterbalanced by his air of always being well dressed, and indeed having a certain patrician style. With it went a finished courtesy that combined traditional politeness with something of the breezy manners of the campus. I liked the aloof formality with which he treated girl students, including myself, while always being most considerate. I knew that he would never do anything to make me feel embarrassed.

At the end of the first month we had a quiz in English. I was bad enough, but it seemed that the others were worse, for our instructor announced that my paper was the best, and added a word of praise as he returned it.

This was the first time that I was aware that Han had noticed me. He seemed startled to find that a girl could be the best student in his class. Perhaps a bit incredulous and, I thought, the least bit resentful. I rather liked this, and could feel his eyes on me as I rose to receive back my paper.

Toward the end of the year the students of our college decided to invite the faculty to a feast. This involved cooking food for over eighty persons. The students planned to do it themselves. However, most of the work devolved on the small minority of girl students, although the boys did the buying and were to help with serving the meal. I was assigned by the committee to the preparation of the meat dishes. I was dismayed when I went to the courtyard outside the kitchen at the time appointed to find I was the only person to cope with a big pile of chickens and ducks, all of which had to be cut up into pieces small enough so that they could be handled with chopsticks. I started in on what promised to be a long and arduous task.

A little later I happened to glance up and saw Han looking out of a window in the men's dormitory across the courtyard. What he saw, as he described it later, was one girl surrounded by dead birds. He looked down at me speculatively but said nothing, and I looked away and went on with my labor. A moment later he appeared beside me and offered to help. This was most unusual because such work was in the women's sphere and was particularly out of place for a student. Also I knew that in his aristocratic home he would rather be found dead than seen doing such menial work. However, he got a knife and went at it in businesslike fashion. We seemed to find nothing to talk about and toiled together in silence. This seemed to me a strange and rather undignified way to get acquainted and I did not know whether to laugh or merely try to hide my embarrassment.

Soon he had finished several birds and laid out the portions

very neatly. Then he turned to me with a quotation from the Analects.

"Confucius liked his meat correctly cut," he said, waving his hand at our joint array. "Looks all right, doesn't it?"

I nodded.

"Remember what it says about Confucius? If the meat was off-color he would not eat."

I looked at him with a new admiration, for this seemed to me to put our activity on a lofty plane and make it really a classic occasion. I wanted to tell him that I too had memorized the Analects and knew those quotations, but was too shy to do so. So we finished in silence. I thanked him and he bowed formally. This left a warm place in my heart. It was in part the work, but more that I had felt lonely in the unfamiliar solitude of the strange courtyard. Indeed it seemed so deserted and so dreadfully quiet that I couldn't help being a bit afraid that there might be ghosts around, even in this school of theology, and his company gave me a great deal of comfort.

Shortly before our next examination Han's roommate came to borrow my notebook. This seemed strange as he was not taking this course, but I guessed what he wanted it for. I was using it myself that morning to complete my review and told him that I would bring it to the dining hall at noon. When I did so Han was standing near by and I took the occasion to ask his roommate why he wanted my notebook seeing that he was not taking this course. Han heard this, as I intended he should, and flushed with embarrassment until even his ears became red. But he seemed unable to speak up and tell me that he was the one who wanted the book.

However, when it came back next day I found in it a letter and a poem. The letter was commonplace enough and the poem had no slightest hint of romance, but I was greatly impressed with the literary style of both and the elegance of his penmanship.

2

I often thought that since we had to be refugees, we could hardly have found a pleasanter place than the beautiful and spacious campus of this Christian university. Its charm, from my point of view, was not the magnificent Chinese architecture, Western-style residences, or ample space for games, but the brooks crossing it here and there, the willows along the brooks, the small and level paths with thick bushes on both sides, the green lawns, and especially the fields of the neighboring farms, which came right up to the border of the campus.

It was now late spring. The weather was quite warm. Willows and grasses grew older and became so green that they were just like the color of the running streams. The scent of flowers and the sweet fragrance of fields of the golden rape in blossom came from afar. All this made people feel comfortable and animated. Therefore, after supper, many students would saunter along the paths under the green willows, and boys and girls sat side by side here and there on the thick green grass. When one saw the many shadows reflected in pairs in the clear, smooth-moving water, one felt still more deeply the quiet beauty of the campus.

A few times, Han took me for a walk about the campus in the early evening. But we were too conscientious to waste time that should be spent in study, and seldom spent more than half an hour. One evening, as we took our usual walk along the winding paths and were about to turn back, Han hesitated.

"Why shouldn't we go a little farther?" he asked.

I didn't answer, and we started back in silence. After a little, he spoke half apologetically:

"Of course you are busy with your studies. But it seems to me that it really doesn't matter if we spend a little more time after supper."

As a matter of fact, I felt that I too would like to spend a little more time, but was shy about being out with him after dark and did not know what to say. But it occurred to me that if I refused his suggestion it would not only be impolite but might hurt his feelings, so after a bit of hesitation I ventured a reply. "No, I'm not busy at all. I am really a lazy student. Your suggestion is very good, but . . ."

"But what?" he immediately asked.

"I mean I have to finish a letter to my family tonight and have to go back early."

He was too much of a gentleman to argue the matter and didn't say anything, but I immediately began to feel awkward. We went along the path in silence. I felt more and more uneasy. I had to say something to make sure that he would not be too disappointed.

"You see, there is no moon tonight. Now during this season, and under these circumstances, if there is a moon hanging in the clear sky and shining through the green leaves of willows, it would be very beautiful. And . . ."

As I hesitated, he spoke with conviction. "At this season and under these circumstances, moonlight would be wonderful. I entirely agree with you."

Time passed. One evening, just after supper, he came to me.

"It is full moon tonight," he said. "Will you go with me to take a walk?"

I remembered that I had promised him but said nothing and merely nodded. We went from my dormitory to the center of the campus. Before and behind us boys and girls went slowly in pairs. It seemed a wonderful evening. The sky was clear, no clouds, no stars. An enormous round, bright moon was just rising and seemed to be hanging on the tops of the willow. Han pointed to it and quoted two lines of a famous Chinese poem.

"As the moon is hanging on the top of willows
Friends may meet this very evening!"

I knew the rest of this poem and didn't want to talk further about its meaning or its author, for that would get me into a world that I did not know how to discuss even if I had not felt too shy to attempt it. So I asked him a question.

"I guess you must be very much at home in poetry. I like poetry, but I don't know how to write it."

"Too polite! I can't really believe that," he said.

"But the ancient-style poetry is very hard to write. At least I find it so," I explained.

As we went on around the campus he held forth on how to read and write poetry.

I was content to listen, and the feeling grew upon me that we had a lot in common. In his enthusiasm he forgot to be shy and I had a new appreciation of his personality and a feeling of comradeship that was somehow very satisfying.

Although the moonlight was now very bright, we could barely distinguish the students who sat on the grass or under the trees or beside the thick bushes. But as we passed by we could hear the whisperings between the boys and girls and catch snatches of conversation. Sometimes we talked and sometimes just walked in silence. I felt a part of the natural beauty that covered the whole good earth. Everything was as it should be. At length he broke the silence.

"Shall we find somewhere to sit down?" he asked.

Which we did.

Then, all at once I realized that he had taken my hand. I felt embarrassed, and following my first automatic reaction, shook hands with him, and drew my hand away. This made me feel both awkward and silly, and I sensed that he felt the same way. So after a bit we got up and started back.

As we walked silently, slowly homeward the moon was still

bright and everything was peaceful and quiet. This was the first time that our hands had touched.

3

Summer came early to our campus. The weather was quite warm, but not too hot. The scent of flowers was everywhere. This, with the warm sunshine, made people feel lazy and sleepy. Especially us students, and particularly on Sundays. Some went to the city, some to movies, some to see relatives, some even studied, but most went for picnics. I liked the out-of-doors and the warm weather, so I went to the city very seldom at that time.

One Saturday morning, in our history class, Han took a seat beside me. This was something new, for when there were double seats in classrooms where we took the same course, I had thus far taken pains to get there early and have one of the other girls sit with me, so as to avoid anything in the way of talk that might develop if we should sit together.

On this occasion I was concentrating on the professor's lecture, but not too much so to notice a small folded note that appeared beside my notebook. Before I opened it I could guess what it was.

"Would you like to go on a picnic with me Sunday morning?" it asked.

That seemed a very good idea. I had no reason to refuse. So I wrote on the back.

"I agree."

A few minutes later another note appeared under my notebook.

"When and where shall we go?"

But the professor had lectured so fast that I was already behind on my notes, so I did not answer him again. Just as

class was over, he gave me another note and went away. I was interested to know why he did not say anything. Probably he felt too shy. So I went back to my dormitory before I opened the note. It was brief:

"I shall meet you at the Green Lawn after church. You may go there directly."

I knew the place. It was not far from our campus and was an enclosure of about an acre, with the mounds of several ancient tombs, shaded by enormous trees. The grass was thick and there were always people stretched out and enjoying the sunshine. Around this lovely place there were fields in blossom with the yellow rape flowers, and a few farmers' houses with thick bamboo groves were near by.

I started just after the morning service. As I was walking along, I thought that I should like to trick him, so I did not go toward the Green Lawn directly, but by way of the farmers' houses, where the bamboo grove was thick and I could hide. I would watch him searching for me and then go out to meet him.

Unfortunately, as I was approaching one of the houses, the farmer's dogs rushed out and attacked me. I had always been afraid of vicious dogs, and didn't know what to do except to run as fast as I could. This was the wrong thing, for the dogs attacked more furiously, bit me severely, and tore my new dress. I ran sobbing, with the last of my strength, knowing that it would go hard with me if I should fall. Just at that very moment Han caught sight of me. He came running and drove the dogs away with his stick.

"Have you been bitten?" he asked me anxiously. "Why did you come this way? I've been looking for you everywhere."

I was beyond replying, but my torn dress and stockings gave him the answer, and I sank down, unable to stop weeping, and beginning to feel the pain where I had been bitten, while

he stood by and awkwardly tried to comfort me. What frightened me most, however, was that there had been several cases of mad dogs recently. This scared him too, and as soon as I was able, he led me slowly to the university hospital, where my wounds were dressed, and tests and inoculations made.

I tried to get him to leave, and turn me over to the nurses and doctors, but he insisted on standing by and, at the last, taking me home to my dormitory. This comforted me very much and gave me a new feeling of his sincerity and kindness.

That night I lay awake for a long time. I thought back to the night in my senior high days when I had turned my back on romance and chosen ambition. I did not regret that decision. But here conditions were different. I had gone to a women's college, and all my teachers, both Chinese and American, were unmarried. Much as we had admired the independence and professional competence of these teachers, especially the American missionaries, who had had the initiative and courage to come to a distant land like ours, yet our Chinese traditions led us all the while to feel, deep in the back of our minds, that their lives, lacking home and children, were fundamentally incomplete. This was of course treason in the women's college that I had attended, with its evangelistic fervor for the rights and place of women. But many of the faculty wives on this Western campus were college graduates and still continued their work as teachers or research workers. I thought over, one by one, those that I had met. They seemed to be successful career women, and successful wives and mothers as well. I was by no means committed to romance, but it seemed that something of the sort might be possible for me also. Another point in Han's favor was his sympathy with my revolt against the disabilities of being a girl. He had a somewhat different background. Thus the ladies of his family took part in the clan ancestor worship just the same as the men.

Having reached this sage conclusion, I fell asleep.

4

Our academic life was secluded and peaceful, although our campus had been bombed, and students and faculty killed. But we never forgot that the war of resistance was in progress, and often talked of it and of the future reconstruction of our country and the almost insurmountable problems involved.

Han had had an experience of disillusionment with regard to government similar to my own, save that his was on a provincial level, whereas mine had been on the local and county levels. Indeed it was this that had led him to enter our school of theology.

He told me about his experience as an official in the civilian department of the provincial government. He said that when his fellow officials got together, much of the talk centered around how to get a job as a district magistrate, which was the key position in the county government, and how much money could be extracted in a brief tenure of office. He also had many contacts with officials in the education department, and here the situation was much the same, most being intent on securing positions as principals of schools where they would have control of finances. Many had stories of friends who had made a killing by speculating with the school funds to which they had access. He said bitterly that too few of his fellow officials were seriously concerned with good government or the welfare of the people. This had finally preyed upon his mind so that he had resigned his position and entered upon a period of study to see how Christianity might be applied to the betterment of this situation. He was a second-generation Christian, and very sincere and honest in his patriotism and devotion. It was this that fundamentally drew us together.

It seemed to us that some ethical and spiritual reorientation was necessary. After family solidarity and clan loyalty had been emphasized for centuries it was inevitable that family

interest would be put ahead of public service. National spirit could not be developed overnight. We hoped that the Christian spirit of brotherhood and service might help provide a new basis for democracy in China, and that the Christian dynamic might give it actuality and success.

We were both impatient of academic life and wanted to take part in practical affairs, yet we were sufficiently conscious of the multitude and complexity of the problems facing China to realize keenly that we needed much more preparation if we were to have any useful and constructive share in the building of a modern democracy. The provincial government, too, realized this need and set up a number of scholarships for special training of officials in America. Han applied and was accepted.

5

Our graduate courses were not too heavy, but we had to do a lot of reading. Sometimes I felt very tired but could not find a place to rest on our crowded campus. I used to go to the music room, but did not find playing the piano a good method to relax. I often felt extremely bored. Han seemed to understand this and one Saturday afternoon suggested that we go to the university tea shop. I refused. I had never been in a tea shop, and in my home province had always heard that tea shops were the resort of rascals, kidnapers, robbers, and low-class people generally. For a girl like me to go to such a place was unthinkable. However, I soon learned that the tea shops near the campus were not as bad as I had imagined. Even the professors went there.

This was especially true of the university tea shop that was on the campus and open to students only. It was always crowded with them, drinking tea and eating watermelon seeds, peanuts, sweets, powdered dried beef, and other delicacies hawked in bamboo baskets by small boys. The price was cheap

and the food delicious. Many students found this a comfortable place for study. But most played bridge, and I soon got into the way of going occasionally with a group of friends for this purpose.

Somehow Han was usually cut as my partner. His game was not bad. He could guess correctly what the others had and liked to bid high. Although we won often, I still feared to lose, and his boldness made me anxious. He was both tricky and humorous. When he made an especially good play, he would say, "As long as I am alive, China will never be destroyed." This was a phrase in common use which summed up the do-or-die attitude of the war of resistance against Japan. He used it half humorously, but I sensed that this spirit had become a part of his life and that even in such lighter moments it was an indication of something that went very deep. This impressed me greatly.

Once we made a slam and, amid the congratulations and laughter that followed, one of Han's fellow students took the occasion to tease us.

"It is across a bridge like that," he said in English, "that the cowherd and the spinning maiden can meet."

We blushed and all the rest laughed, for this was a classical allusion to a meeting of lovers in the sky who crossed the bridge of the Milky Way. I was too confused to think of anything to say in reply, but not Han.

"This cowherd," he said, indicating himself, "is so angry that he is ready to beat his cow, so beware."

This was a crude pun in English on the name of his fellow student, which was Kao, and had the effect of setting everyone laughing again and diverted attention from me so that I did not feel embarrassed any longer. His quick wit made a lasting impression on me. Here was one who would be equal to any occasion.

He often asked me to go to the movies. At first I was not

willing to go with him alone and always asked another girl to accompany us. Han afterward used to say with mock plaintiveness that he had spent a great deal of money on that girl who meant nothing to him whatever. But in time I got over this.

Once, after a movie, toward the end of our second year, we found it was raining heavily, with a high wind. There were no taxis in Chengtu during wartime, and the rickshas were all taken. Han suggested that we go to a restaurant until the storm was over, but according to the regulations of my dormitory the door was locked at ten o'clock, and I had to get started at once. We were soon wet to the skin. After we got out of the city gate, I began to shiver. He held my hand tightly and broke the silence.

"I ought not to have asked you tonight," he said. "If you get sick, I shall blame myself."

He was so solicitous and so sincere that it made me feel much better.

"No matter," I replied. "Don't worry about me. I have come as a refugee from my province to yours, and in my journeyings I have eaten many kinds of bitterness. I am afraid that you, who have never had this kind of experience, are really the one in danger of getting sick."

He did not say anything except "Thank you!" and we struggled on toward the campus in silence. The wind became rougher and the sky darker. And then it happened. He was speaking again, but so earnestly and in such a low tone that I could barely hear him.

"I have studied you for two years now. I have found that you have plenty of ability. I like a girl able, wise, and virtuous. I must be very lucky, since I have met you in school."

This made my heart beat high. I felt even my ears become hot. After a while I began to try hesitatingly to answer him.

"My feeling is just the same. In these two years, I have found that you are a real gentleman, polite, sincere, honest, and brave. I appreciate your good character and high ambition. So far as I am concerned, I have never seen anyone—"

But that was as far as I could get. I stopped, even though I had not yet finished what I wanted to say. Perhaps he knew what I meant or perhaps he was too shy to ask, so we went on once more in silence.

But we began to be aware of another sound, and he suddenly questioned me:

"What's that noise in your shoes?"

Immediately I began to realize that the water pouring down from my whole body was sloshing about in my shoes, which made a queer sound as I walked. I couldn't help laughing.

"You'd better listen to your own," I countered.

He too began to laugh, and so we went happily through the storm until we reached my dormitory a bare five minutes before the deadline.

His proposal of marriage took the form of a letter. He told me afterward that he felt it was easier to say exactly what he wanted to say in writing than to try to blurt it out when he would feel much embarrassed. I replied in the same way that I would be willing to accept, but only if he secured the permission of my family in the usual manner. I further specified that I was unwilling to be bound by the traditional customs of a big family, for I knew that his was very much the same as my own and I did not want to be under the thumb of a mother-in-law and insisted that we two must have our own separate and independent home. To all of this Han agreed, and indeed his ideals were very much the same as my own in this regard.

He immediately wrote to his father to ask his permission, although he really had considerable property of his own and

could act independently. However, we both agreed that we desired to have his father's consent and blessing.

His father replied that he was willing to agree with his son's choice, but that his wife must be from a good family at least equal to theirs in scholarship and official position. He stated that otherwise he and all of their other relatives would lose a great deal of face. Han wrote him in reply giving him full assurance in this regard.

Securing permission from my family, and particularly from my mother, was something else again. This was not a matter I could properly write to them about. It had to be done either by Han or by his family. He took the initiative. One of our fellow students, a Cantonese, had a friend who was a college student in the capital city of my home province, two thousand miles away. At Han's request he at once wrote to this friend to inquire whether he could get in touch with anyone from my home city who might know members of my family. This was finally worked out, but it took months, and Han's letter to my family had to pass through five different hands before it reached them, and then their reply had to be relayed back to him in the same fashion. It was not until after my departure for America that the word from my family reached him. However, he knew that he could count on me if my family approved.

During this period I had to go by air from Hong Kong to Shanghai, but the plane on which I had my reservations turned out to be full, owing to some mistake, and I had to wait for a later flight. The one on which I should have gone crashed and all of the passengers were killed. When the news of this reached Shanghai, Han immediately telegraphed to my mother in Kan San to learn whether I had actually been on the plane. His letter asking for me in marriage had not yet reached her, so she was puzzled. When I arrived there

later, she showed me the telegram but did not know who it was from, as she had not yet heard of him. She was highly curious over having this unknown man telegraphing her concerning me. I was much embarrassed in having to tell her about it before the arrival of his letter could regularize everything. Indeed, it was not until Han came to America, a few months after I did, that he brought with him the letter from my family and the word that both his family and mine had fixed on a date for the announcement of the engagement. This at long last squared the whole matter with the requirements of Chinese custom and enabled us to feel that we were really engaged, although our betrothal still had to be announced officially.

IV

Our Family Breaks Up

At the end of the war I was awarded a scholarship for graduate study in America.

Everywhere on my travels from the west to Nanking and Shanghai, and later to Kan San, I found everything worn out and in disrepair, and everybody exhausted by fifteen years of almost constant warfare. City streets were in bad shape and country roads were worse. Power plants were in precarious condition. Of over a hundred chemical plants in Shanghai, only nineteen were operating. The retreating Japanese army had made a clean sweep of the many steamers, launches, barges, and small cargo boats that used to ply the myriad streams and canals of the great Yangtze Delta, and there was no way of moving goods or grain.

V-J day had been a time of great optimism. We had all been making postwar plans. Everything was going to be fine. Instead, everything was in a mess, and it seemed almost impossible to do anything about it. All this contributed to the mounting inflation.

Before my sailing for America, I went to Kan San for a brief farewell visit, only to run into further complications in connection with the division of property that marked the breakup of our family. This arose in part out of the death of my grandmother.

2

Grandmother had died soon after I went to Free China, and mother told me that she died as energetically as she had lived. One Sunday night she dreamed that she was ushered into a room by a radiant presence and told that it was reserved for her and would be ready in five days. The next morning she called the family around her.

"Last night an angel took me to my room in Heaven," she said, and gave them a detailed description of it. "They are expecting me in five days from now," she concluded. "I shall die on Friday."

After the exclamations and expostulations had quieted down, she began to give instructions.

"Telephone to all my children to come," she ordered. "I want them all present when I depart."

My mother started to tell her that she was strong and well enough to live for a long time yet, but grandmother cut her short and demanded that the preparations go on. She had long ago secured her coffin, insisting on a simplicity that made Third Aunt concerned over a loss of face at this lapse from the elaborate coffining customary with families like ours. She also directed that she be buried in the plain white clothing she was then wearing, instead of the usual many layers of mortuary garments—my father had had thirty-five—and that the rest of her wardrobe be donated to charity through the church. Then she sent for the pastor and with him planned her funeral service down to the last detail. After this she slept, wakening from time to time to welcome the arrival of this grandson-in-law, or that great-grandchild. On Thursday afternoon she was told that all had arrived.

"Then call them together so that I can say goodbye," she

directed, and the room soon filled. She looked around at them. "Don't be so solemn," she said.

She joined in singing her favorite hymns, and listened attentively to the reading of her favorite scripture and prayer by the pastor, who had been sent for. Then, one by one, she bade each a cheerful farewell until they should meet again in a better world. In the case of several who were not Christians, she exhorted them to believe so that they could be together in Heaven. She was particularly concerned over her only daughter.

"How can we be together as mother and daughter in the next life?" she said. "You must think of this, and study more about Christianity. This is my last word to you."

Her daughter promised, and really took it to heart, for later she became an earnest Christian.

This completed, grandmother waved her hand and dismissed them and went back to sleep.

On Friday she awakened early.

"Is everyone here?" she asked, and my mother replied in the affirmative.

"Is this the fifth day?" she inquired, and my mother told her that it was.

"Then it is my day to go," she said.

She had my mother bathe her, comb her hair, and dress her in simple white, ready for her coffin. Mother placed on her forehead her favorite pearl ornament, but grandmother had her take it off and keep it to send to me.

When all was completed, she looked around the four generations of her family gathered about the bed.

"Let us all pray to God," she said.

All knelt around the bed in silence. Grandmother put her hands, palm to palm, on her breast in the attitude of prayer, and closed her eyes.

And so she passed peacefully away.

As mother told me about this, I could see that it had made a deep impression on her, and we talked a number of times about the contrast between grandmother's death and that of my father. I think it was only at this time that Christian ideas gained the upper hand in my mother's thinking over her earlier primitive and Buddhist religious training. The development of a well-rounded Christian faith was a slow process. It was natural that all of us began by adopting what we could understand or what met our immediate needs.

3

Up to this time, grandmother had held in her hands the whole household authority. This was now transferred to First Uncle. He worked hard to maintain the large family during the twenty-seven months of mourning, ending with her burial, but could not counteract the tendency toward decline. Everyone worked for personal gain. The younger members and their wives left home to take up their own business. So Third Uncle suggested that they divide the estate.

A committee was organized by the important men among the near and distant relatives, with subcommittees to measure the rice fields, appraise other real estate, and divide household equipment. All properties were divided into four parts except personal dowries of wives, which were always excluded in such cases—four parts because grandmother had insisted that in any division of property the line of my fourth uncle must be continued, although he had married at sixteen, died at seventeen, and his wife had died the following year leaving no issue. So Second Brother had been designated as his adopted son and would now receive his share of the property. Third Uncle had tried to block this in favor of his own second son, and had

held the matter up for some time and caused some dissension, but had finally had to agree.

The committee decided on a day for the division and sent out invitations to the important relatives. The ceremony was formally opened in the reception hall, decorated with green bamboo and flowers. The great lamps were lighted, candles and incense burned in front of the ancestral tablets. A porcelain vase was set in the center of the ancestral altar, inside of which were placed four folded papers duly marked. The mouth of the vase was sealed with red paper. Firecrackers were set off.

Sze Pa Kung, who was master of ceremonies, came forward, made three bows to the ancestors, and removed the seal from the porcelain vase. In it was a pair of ivory chopsticks, which he took out. Then he summoned representatives of the four groups, in order of seniority.

First he called First Uncle, who went forward, knelt down, and knocked his head three times on the floor before the ancestors. He received the ivory chopsticks and with them drew out a folded paper. He opened it and turned it over to grandmother's sister's husband, who wrote it down on the record. Next he called Third Brother, representing my father's branch of the family, who went through the same routine. Then he called Third Uncle, and last, Second Brother. Then four duplicate contracts were signed by the four heirs and by all the other important relatives as witnesses, after which a feast was served to thank all for their presence and co-operation.

The main house, where we had lived for so many years, was drawn by the first and fourth branches, so mother and my brother and I had to move out to another house. Third Uncle and his whole branch had to move to a house located in the next block. Thus the family which grandmother had managed and held together for so long fell apart after her death.

Our Family Breaks Up

4

I could not at first understand why grandmother could administer our big family successfully for thirty years, and First Uncle, who was an able businessman, have difficulty in holding it together for thirty months.

The first factor was personality. She was a genius as the head of our family. All worked in harmony under her direction. Her wisdom and experience were respected by all who knew her. I have since found that at the center of every successful big family in China there is a woman of this sort.

The second factor was personal relationships. She once told me her motto: "Manage business in order, treat all with generosity." If there had been a bad year or sickness, she would cut down on rents of tenant farmers or give help in some other way. All financial arrangements had a personal factor of elasticity.

The third factor was organization. Grandmother picked the husbands for twenty-three of our slave girls, who were married in accordance with the contract made when she purchased them. Seven were married to our tenant farmers, and eight to clerks in our shops. Thus there were fifteen key families where the husband realized that grandmother had provided him a wife far superior to anyone he would ordinarily have been able to marry, together with a generous dowry, and the wife had been trained in our household under grandmother's direction. All these young women were encouraged to visit us often and never departed without gifts, and grandmother was shrewd in turning the conversation in such a way as to provide her with information as to everything that was going on. She easily got the co-operation of these wives in persuading their husbands to work along the lines she considered most profitable for all concerned. Including our family.

First Uncle could not function through this network of feminine relationships, and First Aunt did not have the ability to step into grandmother's shoes and do it for him. He did not know the men concerned, and when he tried to put all these affairs on a strict business basis, friction and misunderstanding resulted. Under grandmother's free and easy maternalistic pattern, the men had had the illusion of initiative and freedom which was lost when First Uncle took over.

A second question that puzzled me and caused me concern was the breakup of our branch of the clan. Did this represent a trend in Chinese society? Was it healthy or not?

Three changes were taking place that affected the clan. A new law of the central government provided that daughters inherit property equally with sons, whereas previously only sons inherited and girls got nothing but their wedding dowry. This meant that fragmentation of clan property went on twice as fast. Thus my mother was the only child in a very wealthy family. She got a handsome dowry but nothing more. Instead, her parents adopted the fifth son of her father's oldest brother and he inherited the entire property undivided. At that time my mother and all the others concerned accepted this as a matter of course without the slightest question. Later she came to look back on it as a great injustice.

The second change was that young people began to fall in love on an individual basis without regard to family interests. My brothers married girls for their intrinsic value as persons, disregarding the fact that they came from families with far less financial and official status than ours. This was totally different from the virtual exchange of girls among the big families which previously had welded them into an inner circle in our city, and thus maintained a monopoly of position and power. Even in the case of my marriage, though our families were

equal, they were two thousand miles apart, so that neither profited in the old way by the alliance.

The third change was that most young wives—myself included—wanted homes of their own and rebelled against being incorporated into a big family under the thumb of a mother-in-law.

One thing seemed clear. It was our urbanized branch of the clan that had its ups and downs. The rural nucleus in the country village of Ma To was stable, and continued as it had for centuries.

The fundamental factor here is a very simple one—the availability of adjoining land for additional room to take care of family growth. Take our branch in Kan San. There were eight boys in my generation. This meant provision for eight families when they grew up, with wives, children, and servants. But we were already crowded with only three families. On all sides of us in the city were other big families like our own, wishing to buy adjoining property and unwilling to sell. It was this that had already resulted in our being divided into eight branches in Kan San. In Ma To, on the contrary, there was plenty of land, and it was easy to add on another room or courtyard as needed. The village was thus able to maintain a psychological unity and the dominance of the clan spirit. In the city, each separate big family inevitably developed its own *esprit de corps* and acted more and more along the lines of its own interests. Separation received more emphasis than unity.

5

Another factor was the conflicting character and psychology of my two uncles. First Uncle was devoted to our clan and identified himself with it. Third Uncle was an individualist.

I had been shocked on my arrival to see the change that had

taken place in First Uncle. He had lost weight and his clothes hung about him in loose folds and looked shabby. But he had lost more than that—his old inner vitality and assurance were gone.

Mother told me something of the details. During the Japanese occupation we had lost heavily through bombing, fire, and looting. Then shortly after, one of the most disastrous fires in the history of our city had made a clean sweep of all our shops. First Uncle had tried to recoup this loss by getting together a large shipment from our orchards and farms, and put in all he could borrow, and departed with it for Java. But a storm wrecked two of the junks in which his goods were being transported to Amoy, and he had to continue his trip with only half of his cargo. Although he sold this to good advantage in Java, it left him with a heavy net loss on the trip as a whole—the first time that this had happened. He then resolved to make a special effort to recover, and sold out all our business interests in the South Seas and put the proceeds into rubber. One thing that led him to do this was that his five households had been increasing over the years, and with his children growing up, expenses had increased so that there was little left from our business after they had been taken care of.

However, the rubber market went against him, and the part of our family business that was in his hands was almost entirely wiped out. This was a great blow to him, and he felt that he had no face to return home again, so he settled down in Java, and all the letters the rest of the family wrote, urging him to come back, were of no avail. It was only when grandmother began to weaken and sent him a peremptory order that he finally returned.

It seemed to me that his psychology was more social than individual, and therefore when the fabric of the family business collapsed it left him hollow and empty. Indeed, he died only a few years afterward.

Third Uncle had all this time been building up his personal fortune, which was augmented by the breakup of our family and the distribution of property. He has continued to flourish.

This raises a basic question. First Uncle was loyal to family and clan in the best Confucian tradition. Third Uncle was loyal to himself. Yet he was the one who prospered, although, of course, First Uncle's losses were due mainly to fortuitous circumstances. Does this mean the obsolescence of much of Confucianism, based, as it was, on a social order dating back to the New Stone Age, and its replacement by a more individualistic ethic better adapted to the increasing urbanization and industrialization?

That poses a second question. Will not such change as this be largely limited to cities? China is still eighty-five percent rural, and many authorities consider that it will remain so.

Epilogue

I CAME to America that summer, and Han came a few months later and registered at one of the great state universities a thousand miles away, so that he was unable to come to our campus until a few days before the date fixed by our two families for the announcement of our betrothal. We were delighted to be together again but I could not rid myself of an undercurrent of fear that the great day would be clouded by home longings that would bring an admixture of sadness.

I took Han to introduce him to our professor of Chinese studies and his clever wife, who had been missionaries in China and knew Chinese ways.

"When are you two going to announce your engagement?" asked the professor's wife.

"Day after tomorrow is the day fixed upon by our two families," I told her.

"Then we must have an announcement party," she said.

And so we did.

2

The auspicious day began—for other people, like all other days—at the international date line in mid-Pacific, and came first to the South China coast, where my mother gave an announcement feast to all our relatives. Hours later it approached the western border of China, where Han's big family gathered in a residence a thousand years old to celebrate the betrothal of the eldest male of his generation, the future head of the clan. Half of its circuit later, our day came at last to us on the opposite side of the globe.

We had a gay party, with faculty, students, and friends from our church jamming the professor's apartment. Somewhere they had managed to find the big red Chinese bridal embroidery that covered an entire wall and made us feel wonderfully at home as we responded to the good wishes of these new friends.

During the party the evening papers arrived, and here were pictures of us on the front page, smiling at each other, and a human-interest story on "Chinese boy gets Chinese girl at long last and in a far-distant land," which the editors evidently believed would excite the sympathy of their readers. That they were right was exemplified when we went with the professor to the neighboring newsstand to get more papers to send to our families. The proprietor took one look at us.

"You are the young people in the picture," he said, pointing to it.

We admitted this happily.

"With our compliments," he said grinning, and pushing a pile of papers toward us, "and congratulations."

As we went in for dinner in the big Gothic dining hall, we were surprised to be conducted to the dean's table. In due course the dean called on our professor to make the announcement as the ginger ale he had provided was passed around. He explained the ritual, and taught the students the Chinese words to use.

"Now I will take the place of a Chinese master of ceremonies," he said, "and we will do this just as if we were in the bride's home town."

He looked around to make sure everything was in readiness.

"You will all rise," he ordered, and the student body stood up.

"The betrothed pair will now stand," he continued. We did so, moving out to stand beside him. He held up his glass.

"I will first state for you the name of their two clans. You will say *wan swei* three times and we will drink our toast; *wan swei* means 'long life,' or literally, 'ten thousand years.' Ready."

"Wan swei, wan swei, wan swei!" they shouted together, and drank.

"The betrothed pair will now wish to bow to you to express their thanks and pay their respects, and you will wish to bow in return. Three times, as I give you the signal. Like this: *'Yih jo-gung'* is first bow, *'er jo-gung'* is second bow, *'san jo-gung'* is third bow."

And so we bowed as we would have done to our assembled relatives at home.

"You may now be seated," the professor announced in conclusion, and the students broke into applause. We could not have had a more happy time in our own homes.

So the star-set final hours of a perfect day whisked by to complete their cycle in mid-Pacific, and to vanish into the infinite treasury of time past.

3

My professor and his wife sent out the wedding invitations as if for their own daughter—they have no children—and all our new friends were happily interested and most kind. But when the wedding procession was ready to start, my heart failed me.

I felt forlorn and a long way from home. I was being married off by an educational institution instead of by my own family. Here I was in a chapel on the campus, with a member of the faculty to give me away, fellow students as bridesmaids, and wearing the wedding dress and long veil of a senior student who had recently married. I turned to my professor standing beside me.

"I am afraid," I told him desperately.

He patted my hand on his arm reassuringly.

"Just do everything exactly as when we rehearsed yesterday, and you will be all right," he said quietly.

Then I heard the wedding march begin.

A little later I heard the minister asking, "Who gives this woman in marriage?"

And then the clear voice of my professor standing beside me:

"I do, on behalf of her family and clan in China."

And I felt that my family and clan were there behind me, even if only by proxy, and was comforted.

In the receiving line a little later, with the professor and his wife, we were overwhelmed with congratulations by our American friends. I kept glancing happily at the smiling husband standing beside me. It was a wonderful feeling.

So I entered on a new life in a new land.

We did not know what the future might hold for us—or for China—but whatever it might be, we would face it together.

4

Such was my life. It may appear good or bad according to the point of view, perhaps partly one and partly the other.

The title "Daughter of Confucius" was chosen because of the strict Confucian discipline with which my grandmother ordered our household.

This chapter of my life is now past and gone. Our concern has been to put things down exactly as they took place, and as they appeared to me at that time in the days of my childhood and youth.

(Continued from front flap)

tions of that ancient way of life, the changes that thrust Wong Su-ling and her family into the modern world, read like an exciting novel, and the reader is given a vivid picture of the elite class which has always been the real carrier of Chinese culture.

DR. CRESSY was a missionary in China for the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society from 1910 to 1948, and is now Professor of Chinese Studies at the Hartford Seminary Foundation. His part in this book was to set down the sharply remembered incidents of Wong Su-ling's life and to provide an outside point of view. He has interpreted and made explicit many of the things taken for granted by Chinese, and provided for Western readers a really understandable and wholly fascinating picture of Chinese life today.

He says: "The essential China is not the four hundred million of the peasantry whose lives lie open and have been extensively studied and written about, but the gentry, the small, powerful landlord-scholar-official class, whose private lives lie hidden behind the bamboo curtain that symbolizes the separation of the sexes in their large households. . . . This narrative is significant for understanding contemporary China because it pictures a clan, and the clan is the basic unit of Chinese society, and in large part, of Chinese government at the local level."

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